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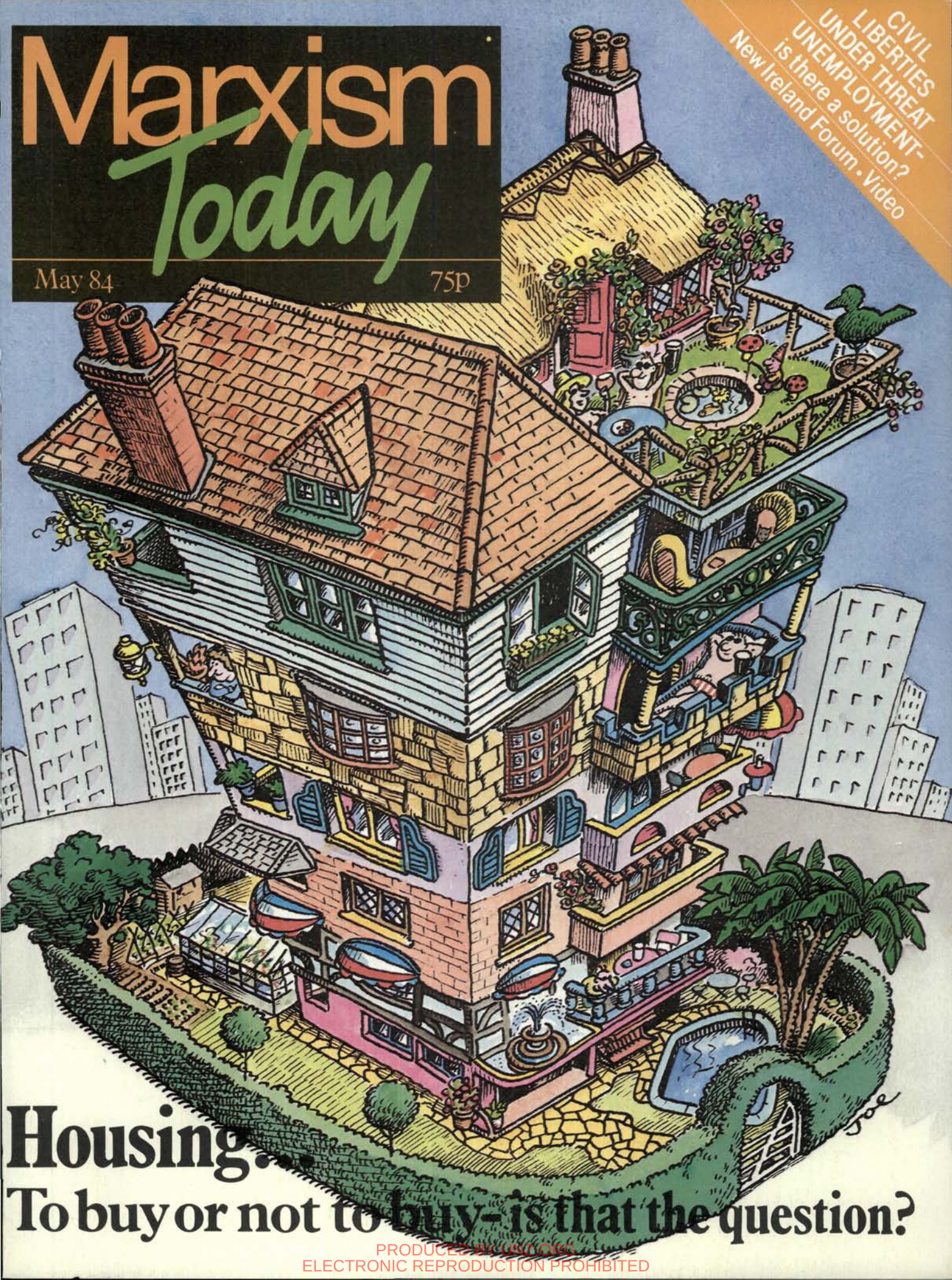

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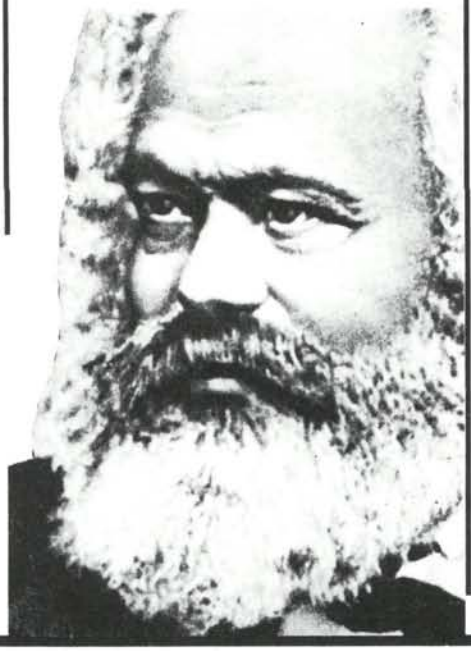

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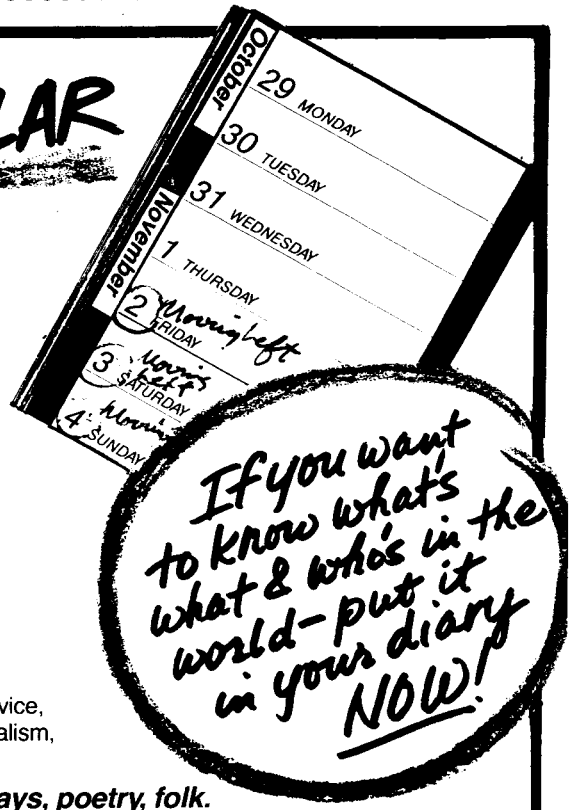

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THE NEW IRELAND FORUM

To the British viewer of 'News at Ten' John Hume and Irish premier Garrett Fitzgerald's relentless promotion of the New Ireland Forum may seem a little perplexing. A talking shop of party leaders spending eight days a month soaking up speeches of everyone from cassocked clerics to barristers and economists is not, on the face of it, banner headline material.

A certain amount of bafflement is understandable — indeed, part of the Irish population shares it. But to the coalition cabinet and opposition in Dublin the matter is genuinely of the greatest urgency. When government TDs (MPs) were despatched recently to the US and Europe for St Patrick's Day celebrations each carried a speech ramming this home. Every opportunity to get the point across on American, European and British media has been gratefully accepted. Even breaks in the EEC battles over the CAP and contributions saw Euro heads of state learning of the very unfunny things that may happen on the way from the Forum if its work is ignored.

The Forum's sessions have taken place in the knowledge that the North, and by extension the whole island, faces a watershed. Either some initiative involving Dublin and London breathes life (or artificial respiration, according to one's pessimism) into constitutional nationalism in the SDLP, or Sinn Fein will assume leadership of Northern Catholics. Thereafter the talking ceases.

The fact is that mule-headed exclusion of the SDLP by Northern unionists has played directly into the Provisionals' hands, leaving John Hume's battered machine with nowhere to go. As one Derry journalist tersely commented recently: 'All Gerry Adams has to do is not get killed and he can't lose.' Superficially, the position now may compare with that at the time of Sunningdale a decade ago. In reality, many options have disappeared since then — power sharing has been scuppered, and blind 'security policy', the official military solution, has not, despite endless predictions, defeated the paramilitaries.

The Forum sessions themselves have responded to this with a comprehensive review of economic, religious and political aspects of the national question. Thorny questions like the status of the Catholic Church in a united or federal Ireland, and economic gaps between North and South, have been confronted unflinchingly. Posing possibilities (unitary state, joint sovereignty between Dublin and London, or a federal Ireland), rather than a single position, deliberately prepares the way for an open-minded rapprochement with the British. Significantly the UDA (who envisage an independent Ulster) was among northern groups who prepared submissions to the Forum — it was not formally delivered because of the Darkley Hall massacre.

Three of the bishops who made a submission together with (left to right) Dick Spring, leader of the Labour Party; Charles Haughey, leader of Fianna Fail; and Dr Garret Fitzgerald

Escalating paramilitary activity south of the border has also bolstered commitment of parties in the Republic to the initiative. The last 12 months have seen a spate of kidnappings, by the Provisionals in the South, including that of businessman Don Tidey. When he was freed two members of Irish security forces died as the Provos broke a previous convention of not firing on Gardai or defence forces.

But perhaps the greatest fear for the Republic's parties is the spread of the Belfast bushfire of Sinn Fein's electoral momentum. Already predictions of an SF vote in the six counties in excess of 100,000 are being made. The vote south of the border will be a nervously-awaited acid test of the volatility of traditional parties' support there.

For the other youthful rugby-loving Labour leader, Neil Kinnock's Irish counterpart Dick Spring, the Sinn Fein advance is particularly ominous. He has unhappily witnessed the hard Left, in the shape of the Workers Party, biting chunks off Labour's urban vote; and now Sinn Fein threaten to do it again on an even larger scale. A by-election in Dublin Central last year confirmed the growing clout of Sinn Fein in deprived working class ghettos of the capital.

This was before the Dublin anti-heroin movement attained its present strength — displayed in round the clock street patrols in various parts of the city, and in a major demonstration in February. Though the Sinn Fein involvement in the 'Concerned Parents against Drugs' campaign is widely exaggerated by its opponents, it could assist at least one SF candidate in the coming Euro elections.

With Irish unemployment among the highest in the EEC, a move by disillusioned jobless towards Sinn Fein will concern the coalition, who fear that visible political instability will discourage the flow of foreign and particularly US capital into the country (promoted abroad as offering 'the highest return on investment in the world', according to official US figures).

Fianna Fail, the country's largest party is also vulnerable. Though possessing a massive election and fund-raising machine (its campaigns resemble US more than UK styles) its ideology is anachronistic, its economic positions constantly reversed, and its leadership largely bereft of intellectuals. It stands to lose votes to SF in areas such as the west and border regions traditionally strong on Republicanism, and in Dublin corporation estates and tenement blocks where it bears much responsibility

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for dismal social and recreational facilities.

The coalition parties led by Fitzgerald's moderate Fine Gael have for their part been meeting the SF challenge with conspicuous gestures to exclude it from the constitutional process — largely a signal to London. Cabinet ministers in Dublin now turn away Sinn Fein councillors in local authority delegations to routine meetings as they arrive at the gates of the Dail. Pressure from Dublin stopped Prior's ministers from meeting Sinn Fein councillors in Belfast on constituency housing matters. The fear that London will capriciously go over the heads of the SDLP and Dublin and talk direct (as under Whitelaw and Wilson) with the Provos is ever-present in cabinet minds.

For Thatcher the meeting of minds of the three main Dail parties on a collective Forum report is one of the most telling signposts on which to reflect. Hume in particular successfully stifled gut urges in FF (and the Mallon wing of the SDLP) to back only the united Ireland option. Relations between the coalition partners and FF's Charles Haughey are normally vitriolic — their agreement now is a shared conviction that vital initiatives cannot be delayed any longer. Even anti-Haughey FF TDs say his commitment to the Forum is total.

His recent FF Ard Fheis (party conference) address stopped short of the usual 'Nation Once Again' climax. He normally bangs the green drum there with the same predictability as 'Land of Hope and Glory' closing the Tories' annual jamboree. This time there was a veiled but significant 'historic compromise' of his own: 'It is our aim,' he said, 'that the Forum should re-establish today the powerful nationalist unity of the past in support of the legitimate and democratically founded right of all the Irish people to live in a united Ireland'. The 'nationalist unity' reference has been taken to mean the collective thrust of the Dail parties.

But as the Adams leadership consolidates its move into dynamic populist involvement (the other target of the hard liners behind the Harrods bombing was growing SF electoralism), experienced Northerners doubt chances of reversing SF's gains — facilitated in the first place by Thatcher's miscalculated handling of the hunger strikes. Having lost out on a joint approach during and after 1981, London and Dublin face the unsavoury prospect of attempting such an approach now, with SF holding an apparently solid mass base of support.

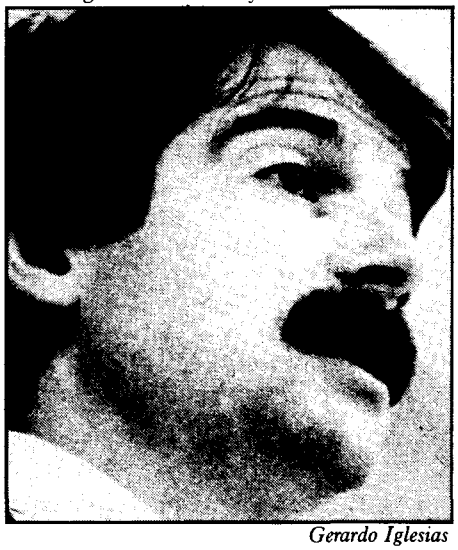
Alan Murdoch

CPSU AND SPANISH COMMUNISTS

The Spanish Communist Party has sent a strongly worded letter to the Soviet Communist Party protesting at its 'interference in the problems of our Party and assistance to those who are trying to split it.' This arises from the presence of a Soviet delegation at the foundation meeting of a breakaway Spanish 'Communist Party' in January organised by former members of the Communist Party of Spain, headed by 69 year old Ignacio Gallego, identified with political positions defeated at the Party's national congress the previous month[1].

Three official Soviet observers were sent, notwithstanding the Spanish CP's request to their party not to attend. Speaking on their behalf, G A Zhukov, editor of the CPSU journal *Party Life*, assured the breakaway meeting of the 'friendly help and solidarity of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union' because 'the courageous and combative party of Ignacio Gallego is the only one that really defends the interests of the workers.'

Seeking to justify their action, the CPSU Central Committee wrote to Dolores Ibarruri, president, and Gerardo Iglesias, general secretary of the Communist Party, claiming most curiously that 'the absolute



Gerardo Iglesias

majority of communists in the country find themselves outside the ranks of the CP of Spain.' The letter went on: 'Also our Soviet comrades are puzzled: they do not understand why the CPSU does not maintain relations with those Spanish communists who hold firm class positions, who base themselves on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism, and who in an international situation which is so complex and decisive wish to have fraternal relations with the CPSU.'

In conclusion the Soviet letter stated: 'At the same time, the CC of the CPSU repeats its willingness to maintain and develop relations with the Communist Party of Spain on the basis of the principles adopted in the communist movement. This in no way contradicts existing practice. We can tell you that in some countries where there are two communist parties (eg, Sweden, India), the CPSU has relations with both parties.'

The Spanish Communist Party leadership refers in its reply to several attempts made since 1968 to split their party, all of which had failed. The 'inspiration, stimulus and support' for those groups 'can clearly be seen as coming from outside Spain.' The Gallego group, seeking to take advantage of the present crisis in the party, would also fail because it was 'a largely artificial creation, whose real roots are not to be found mainly in our working class, our people and our soil.' It constituted a 'factor of division' favouring the exploiters and fuelling the reactionaries' campaign of anti-communism and anti-sovietism.

One recalls the outside backing given to the attempts of Enrique Lister and Enrique Garcia to establish breakaway parties following the 5-power intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, to which the Spanish CP leadership, including at that time Gallego personally, had expressed its strong opposition. This backing came to an end in October 1974 with the meeting of Soviet and Spanish CP leaders, which issued a communiqué condemning 'all actions aimed at splitting and undermining the internal unity of fraternal parties.' Reference was made in it to the main document of the World Communist Conference of 1969, which emphasised that 'there is no leading centre of the international communist movement' and reaffirmed that 'relations between the fraternal parties are based on the principles of proletarian internationalism, solidarity and mutual support, respect for independence and equality, and non-interference in each other's affairs.' Such principles had already been set out in the statement of the World Communist Conference of 1960, which affirmed: 'All Marxist-Leninist parties are independent and have equal rights ... Whenever a party wants to clear up questions relating to the activities of another fraternal party, its leadership approaches the leadership of the party concerned; if necessary, they hold meetings and consultations.'

The Soviet Communist Party's support for the Gallego breakaway is a clear violation of these principles. It was quickly

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condemned by Georges Marchais, general secretary of the French Communist Party, who stated that 'for us there is only one Communist Party in Spain, that of Gerardo Iglesias' and emphasised French communists' refusal to countenance 'support for factions' anywhere.

Unfortunately it is not only in Spain that these solemnly proclaimed principles have been departed from. In his *Stalin and Great Power Chauvinism* (Japan Press Service, 1983), which has recently appeared in English, Japanese Communist Party chairman Tetsuzo Fuwa recalls the Soviet support given to the breakaway Shiga group from 1964. The CPSU acknowledged this to have been unjustified in 1979 when relations were restored with the Japanese Communist Party, which it then recognised as the sole party representing the Japanese communist movement.

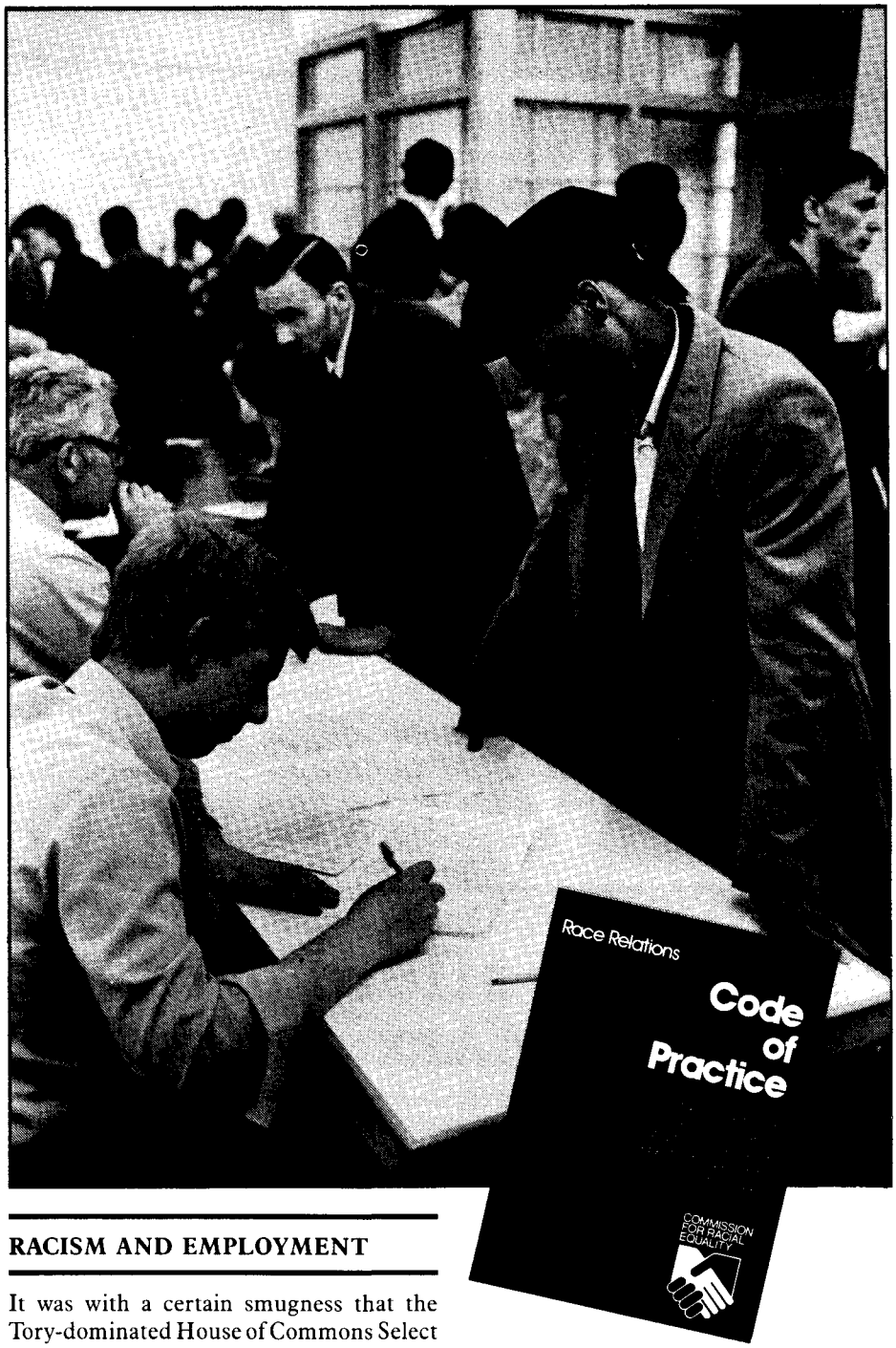
In Australia the Socialist Party (SPA) has from the beginning received Soviet support and recognition as against the Communist Party of Australia, from which it broke away in 1971. In Sweden the CPSU has recognised the Workers' Party-Communists, whilst (as indicated in their letter to the Spanish CP) continuing to maintain relations with the much stronger Left Party-Communists, from which it split off in 1977 on a platform approved of by the CPSU.

The present Spanish case is special and disquieting because it is the first time that the CPSU has been officially and publicly represented at the founding congress of such a breakaway.

The Gallego group is also seeking to develop links with like-minded organisations in capitalist countries. We learn from Amsterdam that it was represented at the founding meeting of a 'Union of Dutch Communists', whose formation on the eve of the final session of the national congress of the Dutch Communist Party in February received publicity from the Soviet news agency, Tass. This body, grouping members of a so-called 'Horizontal Movement' inside the CP, is an openly factional organisation campaigning against the new programme adopted by majority vote at the congress. It has been denounced as thoroughly divisive by the Political Bureau of the Dutch CP, which is playing a leading part in the powerful movement struggling against the deployment of Cruise missiles in the Netherlands. Some of the factionalists have now left the party, though others have stayed on to continue their work inside.

Monty Johnstone

[1] See *Marxism Today*, March, p6.



RACISM AND EMPLOYMENT

It was with a certain smugness that the Tory-dominated House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations reported, the last time it looked at employment issues, that not a single union in Britain had ever introduced the demand for an anti-racist employment policy into negotiations with the employers.

It found that such initiatives had come solely from the employers' side. That was four years ago. Little has changed for black people on the ground since then, though a number of pamphlets have been printed by unions and the TUC. But now things could really start to get better. Why? Because parliament — despite the truculence and prevarication of Norman Tebbit and the outright hostility of some other members of his party — has brought a Code of Practice into operation.

This Code — prepared by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) — seeks to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote racial equality at work. The power to prepare this Code was given to the Commission by the last Labour government. Perhaps the last legacy of those Labour years is the CRE's belated exertion of that power. But already moves are underway at the Department of Employment to destroy the Code. Junior Minister Alan Clark says he wants to amend the

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Race Relations Act so as to give him the right to alter the Code as he sees fit. Other ministers — notably within the Home Office — seem to oppose Clark over this.

Right-wing opposition to the Code is based on the fact that it strikes at the core of the power of the employer to hire and fire as he pleases. During his time at the Department of Employment, Tebbit was not unsuccessful in forcing the CRE to allow the creation of some loopholes in the Code. Thus, to some extent, small employers are let off the hook by the Code. Confusion on the Left in general about the CRE and lack of commitment on race issues allowed Tebbit to get away with it.

All the same, from this month anyone taking an employer to an industrial tribunal for racial discrimination will have their hand considerably strengthened since they will be able to argue that the failure of their employer to implement the Code is itself evidence of the discrimination that they are alleging. Tribunals, in making a judgement, are required to weigh up in the evidence the steps taken — or not taken — by the employer in sticking to the Code.

For trade unions, a crucial clause in the Code is where they are called upon to 'negotiate the adoption of such (equal opportunity) policies where they have not been introduced or the extension of existing policies where these are too narrow'. So what is a union supposed to do when an employer refuses to enter meaningfully into such negotiations? It should report this to the Commission. The CRE could then have good reason for believing that the employer discriminates or allows discrimination. This can lead to a formal investigation resulting in a binding court order on an employer to change employment practices. Hence the fact that unions can report a failure to negotiate is an important bargaining counter for the union side whenever it is at the negotiating table. And the moralistic opposition of unions to racism will now be strengthened by enlightened self-interest.

Of course, in order to achieve this, many trade unionists will need to come to grips with some hard realities. They will no longer simply be able to dismiss the CRE because it is not some 'true representative voice' of black people. The CRE has never said it is. It is the sole national body with the job of seeking to implement the Race Relations Act. Nothing more and nothing less. Opponents of 'ethnic record-keeping' — or monitoring — who claim that this procedure merely aids racist employers to discriminate will have to think again. The Code recommends such monitoring — with proper safeguards — precisely because this will reveal and make overt what is the most common form of racial discrimination by employers — covert action.

However, the first step in any comprehensive attack on discrimination in the workplace is the adoption of a policy by management and unions and the allocation of a senior member of management to carrying out the policy. Those are the primary requirements of the Code. It then goes into some detail on advertising vacancies to reach the entire catchment area; ending sole reliance on word-of-mouth recruiting; requiring only genuine occupational qualifications (or their overseas and other equivalents); interviewing applicants with a standard procedure under senior supervision; ensuring equality in chances for transfer, training and promotion as well as benefits, facilities and services. In all these areas — plus grievance procedures, disputes and disciplinary procedures, redundancies and victimisation — the unions should as of now be seeking to negotiate with the employer.

Of course, if unions fail to negotiate meaningfully they too may be reported to the Commission for Racial Equality.

Martin Rabstein

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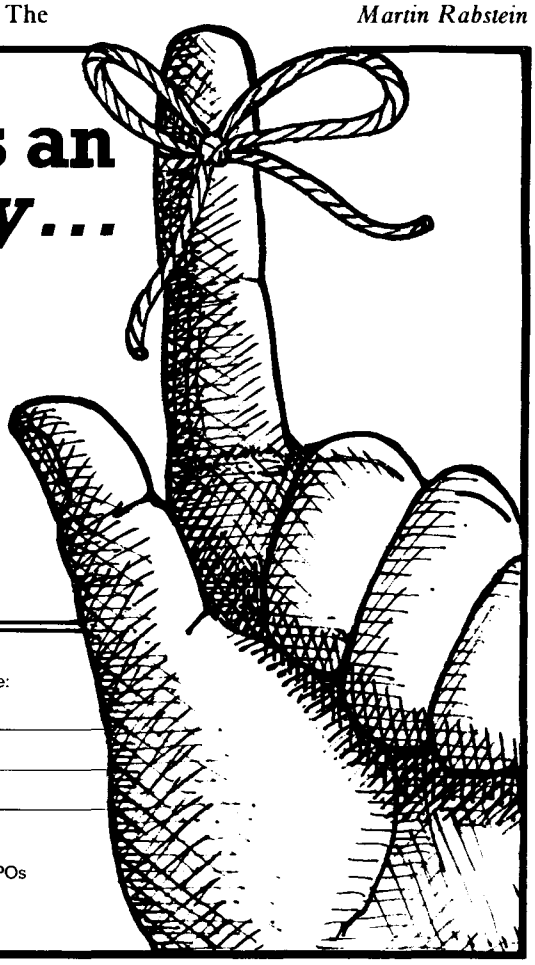

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The Left has got itself boxed into a corner on council housing. The Tories have stolen the initiative. Now is the time for some rethinking.

To Buy or Not To Buy ...is that the question?

David Griffiths and Chris Holmes

THE 1983 GENERAL ELECTION exposed a deep disarray in the Left's approach to housing. The right for council tenants to buy their homes was a vote-winning policy for the Tories, self-confidently parading as the champions of home ownership. The Labour Party's opposition appeared defensive and curmudgeonly.

Yet by all traditional standards, the Thatcher government's housing record had been atrocious. The postwar period had seen substantial progress in tackling housing shortage and inadequacy, but in both respects this has ceased. Between 1979 and 1983 housebuilding (private and public) fell to its lowest peacetime level since the 1920s, leaving a widening gap between the number of households and the number of acceptable homes. The housing stock is also decaying faster than it is being improved: the Government's own 1981 House Condition Survey showed a 20% increase between 1976 and 1981 in homes in serious disrepair, to over a million.

> by all traditional standards, the Thatcher government's housing record had been atrocious

It is, of course, the public sector that has suffered most severely from a reduced supply of decent homes. Disproportionate cuts in building and improvement, as housing bore no less than three-quarters of all the net public spending cuts of the period, were paralleled by the sale of some half a million homes. So, for the first time in its effective 60-year history, council housing is contracting.

The inevitable result is lengthening queues. In 1982 over 160,000 households applied to local councils for accommodation because they were homeless or threatened with homelessness — less than half of whom were offered homes. Even this figure leaves out the large number of single people and childless couples, unrecognised as statutory 'priority groups', who did not think it worth applying. Beyond these again are literally millions of people suffering a painful hidden homelessness — those compelled to share a home unwillingly, living in dwellings 'unfit for human habitation', or trapped in insecure and inadequate bed-sits, hostels, mobile homes, tied housing, squats and other forms of temporary shelter.

As housing opportunities deteriorated, moreover, outgoings rose. Once again the impact fell particularly on the public sector, where council rents rose more than twice as fast as prices generally, to take a record share of tenants' earnings. But home-buyers too now face the highest real interest rates, after allowing for inflation, for many years.

The Left's failing support

Why did this legacy not become a political liability for the Tories? With no credible response to traditional concerns with housing conditions and costs, how were they able to make council house sales the only housing issue that counted in electoral terms?

Some straightforward explanations can be advanced for the relegation of housing need and homelessness from a position of political priority. Postwar progress, though now halted, has meant that wretched housing conditions are heavily concentrated in inner urban areas — not the key electoral battlegrounds. And time lags in capital investment mean that cuts in housebuilding take several years to make an impact — unlike, for example, hospital ward closures.

More fundamental, however, is the erosion of public support for the Left's traditional remedies — above all, building more council dwellings. Thatcherism has been able to exploit a deep credibility crisis in public housing. Several factors are at work in this.

The character of council housing has always been shaped and constrained by the private land and construction markets within which it is placed. The most vivid example is the system building boom of the 1960s. The high-rise and deck-access ('streets in the sky') systems were designed and promoted by the large private contractors, seeking to expand their market share by developing repetitive techniques which allowed the negotiation of large contracts. Governments of both parties, seduced by the prospect of mass housing on the cheap in an era when housing targets still counted politically, actively urged the systems on local authorities. And the latter, beleaguered by the pressures from thousands of tenants in decaying terraces and tenements, hemmed in by political resistance to building council houses in the middle class suburbs, bribed by a subsidy system biased to high rise development, too uncritically accepted them. There was no room in this political economy for the choices and aspirations of tenants to register.

Labour's paternalism

But the culture of Labourism, as well as its capitalist environment, is an essential part of the story. The exclusion of tenants from decisions on the type of homes they were to live in was a characteristic failure. Labour's management of public housing has developed within a framework of centralised bureaucracy and a tradition of Victorian paternalism. Of course scarcity made it easier to exclude tenant choice and initiative. Since the demand for good homes at manageable rents has always exceeded supply, housing managers have been able to treat 'their' tenants as recipients of welfare hand-outs. Architects and planners could impose their choices without any consumer input. Since the managers and designers are mostly male and almost always white, the design,

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allocation and management of too much public housing has been permeated by racism and sexism. It also took for granted the nuclear family unit from which these professionals typically came. Indeed the assumption that anything other than the two-parent married household is deviant, that relationships should be permanent, that young people should live with their parents — all these have met little political challenge from local Labour leaderships until very recently indeed.

Pride of ownership evident in an ex-Council house

The tyranny, then, has been that for tenants the council has always decided. Meanwhile home ownership has emerged as the majority form of tenure. On a whole range of issues — where to live, when to move, when to get a repair done — it has offered a degree of personal choice and control largely absent from the public sector. Of course the Left can argue that, like all 'Tory freedoms', those of home ownership are available only to those who can afford them; or that for socialists choice and control can take collective as well as individual forms. But these points won't really wash. More manual workers are now home-owners than council tenants, while Labourism hardly has a proud record in extending collective rights in the public sector, where tenants' self-organisation has more often been seen as a threat than an opportunity.

The subsidy of home-ownership

What is true, however, is that the attractions of home ownership have been strongly buttressed by financial advantages. In popular mythology home-owners are self-reliant, buying their homes without any call on state assistance, while council tenants are 'feather-bedded' by massive hand-outs. The truth is quite the reverse. As investments, houses have outperformed all other assets since the war, so their owners have benefited from unparalleled, and untaxed, capital gains. Yet mortgage interest payments (up to a £30,000 mortgage) can be deducted from income before it is taxed. Under the last Labour government, subsidies to council housing roughly equated to mortgage tax relief. But this still left home-owners with their appreciating capital asset, and with higher inflation housing tenure had become increasingly significant in the distribution of wealth. Under the Tories the inequality between owners and tenants has grown drastically. Mortgage tax relief for 1984/85 is estimated at £2,750 million, while the exemption of housing from capital gains tax is worth a further £2,500 million. On top of this are improvement grants and discounts to council house buyers. In contrast the Government predicts that total subsidies to council housing for 1984/85 will be less than £700 million.

The financial disadvantage of public rented housing is exacerbated by the inequitable treatment of mortgage lending for private ownership and housing investment by the public sector. The Treasury makes no attempt to regulate lending by building societies and banks to home-buyers but insists that borrowing by councils and housing associations must be rigidly controlled to protect the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

The justifications for this bias against public investment are threadbare. Both building societies and local authorities channel personal savings into housing investment, and there is no reason to suppose that the housing component of the PSBR is economically damaging in a way that the much larger private 'housing sector borrowing requirement' is not. Nor can it be argued that, because it is subsidised, investment in public housing imposes a greater burden on the taxpayer. On the contrary, the imbalance in subsidy described above means that the cost to the community in lost tax revenue of a house built or sold in the private sector is now much greater than the long run cost of public homes to rent. While it is inconceivable, however, that the Chancellor would solemnly announce in parliament a halt to private sector building starts and the granting of new mortgages, because higher interest rates threatened to push up the cost of tax relief, this is precisely what has been done time and again to the public sector. The consequence is that the private sector can respond to demand while the supply of public housing remains arbitrarily limited by Treasury fiat.

The Left's bias against home-ownership

The financial and other inequalities between tenures have existed under Labour as well as Tory governments, albeit with major differences of degree. Their persistence betrays major inconsistencies in Labour's, and the Left's, attitudes to each of the major tenures.

Take owner-occupation first, where Labour's position has been a curious blend of pragmatic support and ideological unease. Historically it has in fact been Labour governments which have introduced measures to assist home-buyers, including the option mortgage scheme (extending the benefit of tax relief to non-taxpayers), the expansion of local authority mortgage lending, and special savings schemes for first-time buyers. Labour has also sustained the tax privileges of home ownership. Objectively it is impossible to substantiate any claim that Labour has opposed owner-occupation.

> **housing managers have been able to treat 'their' tenants as recipients of welfare hand-outs**

But these pragmatic initiatives at governmental level have not been strongly rooted in the Labour Party, where much of the Left's rhetoric has implied that private ownership of housing, like private owner-

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ship of industry, is unacceptable to socialists. Now it is true that people's access to housing has a profound influence on their life chances, which is why it is essential to intervene in an egalitarian way in the *distribution* of housing resources. But homes are, nonetheless, neither collective social facilities nor means of production conferring on their owners economic powers over others, and the classical socialist arguments for public *ownership* are therefore inappropriate. Instead houses are consumption goods, and of a very particular kind at that — ones with a deep personal significance. This is insensitively neglected on the Left when debates about housing are conducted in the language of 'public ownership' versus 'privatisation'.

One way of resolving the Left's ambivalence towards home ownership is to construct an approach to housing which, in effect, pretends that it doesn't exist. This banishes a number of difficult questions and makes the world a much simpler place for socialists. It absolves the Left of the responsibility for developing a realistic political strategy for tackling the financial privileges of home ownership — leaving the field free for housing finance specialists to devise intellectually elegant reform packages which Labour politicians predictably fail to adopt because of their perceived electoral costs. At the same time it leaves us without answers to the practical housing problems faced by the majority of the population. But home ownership no longer conforms to a leafy suburban idyll. It is a highly differentiated sector, and millions of working class owners face problems of disrepair and immobility which cry out for a popular response.

The other side of this coin is that, if home ownership doesn't exist, council housing can be thought of as a universal service like the NHS or state education — at least for the working class. So all those difficult issues of comparability between the experience of renting and owning, touched on earlier, can also be ignored. Public housing can be rationed, managerial priorities put before individual aspirations — and so a bogus universalism comes to underpin the paternalistic welfare model of public housing.

Tory perspective

Since the late 1970s the Tories have exploited these ambiguities in Labour's position with ruthless skill. They recognised that — in the actual conditions that exist — almost everyone with a choice will prefer to buy. Thus the right to buy for council tenants, especially with large discounts from market value, would be a very popular electoral initiative.

The housing *policy* arguments against the Tory 'right to buy' are powerful. Only the better-off tenants are able to buy, even with the discounts. The homes sold are almost entirely the more attractive houses with gardens. The inevitable result is to worsen the prospects of people living in the less desirable council homes, or with no homes at all.

But the *politics* of the argument are very different. Tenants feel entitled to stay in the home they have occupied for years, and to benefit from the extra freedoms that in practice ownership brings. It seems fair that there should be some reduction in the price, when rent has been paid for years 'with nothing to show for it', while owners' house values appreciate. And they react with understandable anger if the Labour Party tells them that they can't or shouldn't — especially when the mouthpieces of that message are themselves middle-class homeowners!

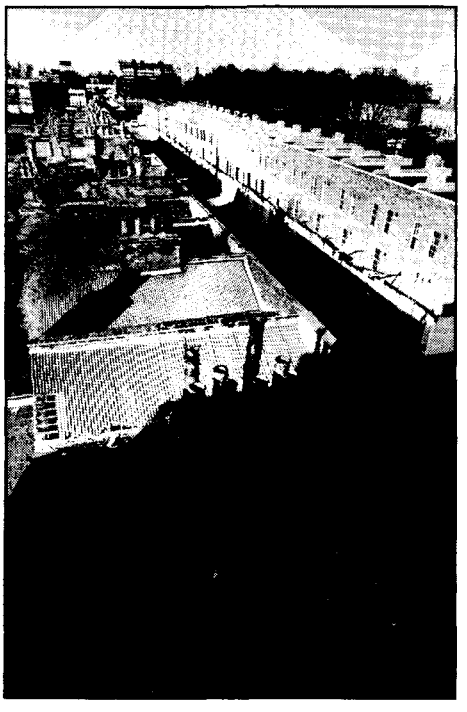
Thus at one level the 'right to buy' was a potent ingredient in the Tories' anti-statist electoral platform. In 1979 and 1983 they succeeded in portraying the Conservative Party as champions of choice and rights, and Labour as bureaucratic bullies. Socialism had become identified with the inability to choose the style of your own front door.

But the aim was more than short-run electoral advantage. Housing policy was being used in pursuit of a wider political strategy. Cuts in public sector housebuilding, enforced rent increases, the financial squeeze on repairs and modernisation, the right to buy itself — all these have aimed to promote home ownership as the preferred tenure for all, while downgrading council housing to a residual second class role. In the Conservative design, the public sector is to be a welfare provision for those on the margins of society — single parents, the old, the chronically sick — while home ownership is decisively established as the 'normal' tenure for 'normal' families. And this family-centred 'property-owning democracy' is seen in turn as an individualised, politically docile, Tory-voting nation. The Tories had noticed, perhaps before the Left, that tenure, not class, is now the single most reliable indicator of voting inclination.

Can public rented housing... be made available on demand?

The issue is not ownership

What should be Labour's strategic response to all this? To be adequate as a socialist housing policy, it must advance the interests of the ill-housed and strive to guarantee everyone a decent home of the type they want. But it must also respond to the widespread aspirations for greater personal choice and control. These twin requirements immediately rule out certain



Council refurbishment, London

options. Capitulation to the populism of Tory policies would clearly be a betrayal of all those who need or wish to rent. Nor is it clear that there would be any reward for such opportunism: if you support Tory policies, why not vote Tory? But a mirror image of Tory strategy, in which Labour denied aspirations to home ownership and pursued a single-minded objective that everyone should rent, is equally defective. As the starting point for an alternative it must instead be accepted, as was implied above, that whether people buy or rent their homes poses no issue of principle for socialists. The issue is not ownership as such — any more than it matters, to use a prosaic example, whether people buy or rent their televisions. Nor is renting, in any intrinsic sense, a 'working class' form of tenure. Within Britain there are strong regional traditions of working class home ownership, as there are of renting. The lack of clear correlation between class, tenure, economic prosperity and the political character of a society is even more marked internationally. For example, West Ger-

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many and the USA have larger rented sectors than Britain; while Poland and Czechoslovakia have higher levels of owner-occupation. The strong association in Britain between tenure, status and politics is a distinctively Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, itself partly constructed by housing policy, and it should be the Left's political objective in housing policy to weaken these associations — not to strengthen them through a rhetoric which implies that home ownership and socialism are antithetical.

Changing needs

With both owning and renting accepted as legitimate, the opportunity for real choice between them is placed on the agenda. There are strong practical arguments in favour of wider choice in housing. People's needs change through time as their circumstances change. For many young people, setting up home for the first time, furnished rented accommodation may make most sense (and the demise of the private landlord means this role must increasingly be taken on by the public sector). Nuclear family households in their middle years may prefer to take full responsibility for looking after the home they expect to occupy for quite some time. Single parents may take a different view, while many elderly owners will prefer to be relieved of increasingly onerous maintenance problems. Fresh choices should be possible at every stage of life.

As well as responding to housing needs, such a strategy begins to reclaim from the Tories the vital political language of freedom of choice, and to give it a fuller and less divisive meaning. It seeks to disentangle housing tenures from their implications for social status, ideology and access to wealth, allowing us to regard them coolly as no more than ways of organising our housing, each with strengths and weaknesses and quite well able to coexist.

But we cannot transcend the present obsession with tenure by pretending that the issue is not there — by merely asserting rhetorically that, for example, owners and tenants have an equal right to a home, or should unite against the money-lenders. We can only move to a housing system less preoccupied with tenure by adopting definite strategies towards the two major tenures as they now exist. The Left needs to embrace the idea that owning is as acceptable as renting, and build a policy for the owner-occupied sector from this premise. This will give it the credibility to argue conversely, against Tory ideology, that renting is as acceptable as owning, and to advance policies that offer a real right to rent as well as a right to buy.

Redevelopment demolition, Manchester: 'We used to live over there'

The right to rent

There are many people who are only able to rent — and many more who would prefer to do so, were the odds not so stacked against it. To offer a real right to rent to both these groups is to insist that rented housing should be available in the quantity and quality, and on the financial and legal terms, which make it a genuine alternative to ownership. After 70 years of decline, the private rented sector is incapable of meeting this need, and there are in any case inescapable conflicts of interest in the private landlord/tenant relationship which make this an undesirable solution. Thus rented housing must be a public sector responsibility, and it is this, not any abstract argument about ownership, which justifies a major public rented sector in housing.

The Left *is* still right to argue, then, that there must be a major programme of public investment in building, improving and repairing rented housing, to put right shortages and the obsolescence of much of the present stock. And quality as well as quantity is crucial. By seeking to satisfy contemporary standards of space, insulation, heating, amenities and surrounding environment, plans for new homes to rent can avoid the self-defeating economies of earlier housing drives. This involves accepting that — for reasons already explained — there should be no more limits on the freedom of public authorities to build than there are on private builders.

> the public sector is to be a welfare provision for those on the margins of society

But even homes of better quality will not be attractive unless they are run in a more responsive and democratic way — one which breaks with the traditional landlord /tenant relationship. This entails strengthening tenants' rights, giving support — including financial assistance — to tenants' organisations, developing responsibility for repairs to neighbourhood level, and improving the quality of the service offered. Co-operative self-management should also be encouraged where tenants themselves prefer this. The aim is to demonstrate in practice that public ownership of housing need not mean intrusive state control over how people live. Instead we need to show that access when needed to public resources such as repair and improvement services can *extend* freedom and choice.

The supply of public housing

Taking this further, can public rented housing itself be made available on demand to those who require it? Only this could match the experience of choice available to home-buyers; yet the instinctive reaction is to dismiss it as utopian, giving the scarcity of desirable homes — especially houses with gardens — to rent.

The constraints on supply would be relaxed, however, if the housing applicant brought a house with them. Might not owner-occupiers wishing to re-enter renting, at a point in the life-cycle when this seemed appropriate, have a 'right to sell' to

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the local authority? Might not private tenants be able to require the council to buy their home from the landlord — thus triggering the transfer of privately rented housing into social ownership to which the Left has long aspired, but in a way controlled by the tenants themselves.

More radically still, might not ordinary housing applicants, identifying a home on the private market which they wished to rent, require the council to buy it for them? This is not the place to explore the practicalities of such a proposal (though sceptics should note that the Housing Corporation has already run a scheme on these lines for part-rent, part-buy occupiers, called 'do it yourself shared ownership' — why not 'do it yourself renting'?). It is put forward to emphasise a critical flaw in the reflex argument about scarcity. For it is almost always assumed on the Left that the public rented sector can only be extended by more building (plus the municipalisation of the private rented sector). The profile of the public housing stock is thus accepted as being set by what councils now own — 'our homes', as Labour councillors and activists so often call them.

This myopia stems from the preoccupation, already discussed, with the single sector of council housing, and the acceptance of a rigid boundary between the public and private sectors. In reality the whole of the nation's housing stock is 'our homes' — and it contains millions of houses with gardens. A great deal of the apparent scarcity is thus no more than a severe shortage of good homes in the existing public sector, while there are no real shortages for people who can get mortgages. But deeply embedded in all our thinking is a double standard that precludes renting on demand, with its attendant subsidies, but raises no eyebrow at buying on demand, with its attendant tax reliefs.

> Whether people buy or rent... poses no issue of principle for socialists

It is, of course, the same ghetto mentality about the existing public stock which has led the Left to the barricades on council house sales. But if a right to rent entails free movement of homes from private to public sector to meet demands, the other side of the coin could be a much more relaxed attitude to transfers in the opposite direction. The issue is not the ownership of particular homes, but the maintenance of an adequate supply in both sectors.

The needs of owner-occupiers

But the right to buy can anyway be given a much broader meaning. The Left has barely begun to develop a popular approach to the owner-occupied sector — apparently leaving constructive thinking in this field to others, like the Abbey National. But there are many problem areas which invite public intervention.

The first problem is to enter the sector at all. Despite its long-run financial advantages, the initial costs of home ownership are considerable — the more so in inflationary times, when the real cost of a mortgage is loaded onto its early years. New forms of low-start mortgage, and a redistribution of subsidy towards first-time buyers, could both help here.

Professional restrictive practices also swell the costs of entry — and make the business of moving house quite unnecessarily tortuous. Legislation is now promised to end the solicitors' monopoly on conveyancing, and some building societies have moved to cut out the waste of separate surveys for the buyer and lender.

But more radical approaches are needed — and it will be a sadly missed opportunity if the Left leaves the initiative with the Tories in an assault on professional closed shops. Why should houses, like cars, not come with log books (and users' manuals)? Could not local authorities tackle the problem of 'chains' of sales, noted in the peculiar one-to-one nature of house exchange, by acting as secondhand dealers?

There is, in fact, great scope for public sector initiative — whether by local authorities, workers' co-operatives or other public enterprise. House exchange is one field; repair and improvement another. Many owners, all too used to negotiating the jungle of the building industry, would welcome the availability from the council of reliable building services. As in the rented sector, the approach would be one which respected the choices of the individual householder but offered access to public reserves when and where these were needed. The particular problems of minorities within the sector could also be tackled. We have already emphasised the diversity of home ownership. Inner city leaseholders, often from ethnic minorities; mansion block residents, burdened by unfair service charges; mobile home owners — all of these need stronger legislative protection.

Inadequate, overcrowded accommodation, Manchester

Grasping the nettle

In constructing a strategy, however, the Left cannot simply add up the demands of every tenure group and expect a coherent result. The tenures cannot be taken in isolation and their demands aggregated: the relationships between them are also crucial. This is why a far-reaching reform of housing subsidies is essential: without it no other steps towards equality between owning and renting will survive the pull of the financial bias towards home ownership.

The Left has allowed itself to be duped into a paralysis of silence about the scale of this bias. The fear is that any demands for reform — beyond the most modest step of phasing out mortgage relief at the higher tax

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rates — will be portrayed as an attack on home ownership as such. This is a doctrine of despair. If socialists are serious about an attack on inequality, they cannot condone the grotesque inequities that disfigure housing choice and push tenants into a deeply disadvantaged position. In theory the financial support for renting could be increased to match that for owning. But the cost would be huge — and there are many other calls on public expenditure. There must, therefore, be a redistribution of support away from the owner-occupied sector as a whole. Yes, there are electoral risks here: but they can be minimised in various ways. The practical strategies for the owner-occupied sector already outlined, moved alongside financial reform, should have much positive appeal for home-owners. The financial reforms should themselves be sensitive, redistributing resources *within* as well as from the owner-occupied sector — from rich to poor; from 'traders-up' to first-time buyers; and towards support for essential repairs rather than mere exchange and cosmetic improvement. They should be placed within a broader egalitarian strategy for social security and taxation, which redistributes financial support towards lower income groups, however they are housed, at the same time as it seeks to detach income maintenance from tenure. And reforms should, of course, be carefully phased in over a period of years, to cushion any losers. But the strategic aim must be kept clearly in view: a system of housing assistance which is unbiased between the tenures but progressive in its impact on the distribution of income — the precise reverse of the qualities of the present system.

The challenge

Much of this strategy inescapably involves central government action. But no progress will be possible unless, starting now, we can change the terms of the debate. If, come the next election, the central housing issue is still whether council tenants should have the right to buy on current terms, the Left will have failed.

The challenge is to bring different questions to the centre of the political stage. Why are so many people without a proper home? Why are local authorities denied the freedom to meet their needs? Why can tenants not choose where they live? Why do the wealthier home-owners enjoy such great privileges? Do the Tories really have anything to offer to poorer owners?

As well as questions, we need answers. In housing as in other areas, many traditional Left approaches are failing to convince. We need practical but imaginative proposals, and in this article we have tried to point in some of the right directions.

But, like Thatcherism, we need to root our ideas in people's experience. Thus the local councils that Labour controls need to commit themselves to a new approach. Using to the full the powers and resources they have. Demonstrating in action a commitment to the best possible quality of service. Supporting people's rights to the maximum say over their own homes. All this is fearsomely difficult within present legal and financial constraints, but it is the only way to show that we mean what we say.

Finally, many interests can be mobilised around elements of the approach outlined — council tenants, many home-owners, building and housing workers, local politicians. They need to be brought together in a campaigning alliance. We have argued that the Left has been trapped within an inadequate housing ideology, which has eroded its credibility. But there is a risk that this kind of analysis can become self-indulgent and paralysing. To win the Left needs also to act. □

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Taking Liberties

Interview with Larry Gostin

Larry Gostin was active in the American civil rights movement. After six years as director of MIND, he has recently taken over as General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties. Here he is interviewed by Alan Hunt and Stephen Sedley.

A number of civil liberties issues are currently playing a central part in British politics — NUM picketing, the Sarah Tisdall case and the freedom of demonstration at Greenham Common. Do you see any link between these issues and is there any evidence of a general assault on civil liberties?

We're seeing a pattern of neglect of civil liberties on an unprecedented level. I think this is probably the most authoritarian government I have ever seen. They are simply not willing to tolerate differences of opinion and are using high-minded sounding concepts like patriotism, national security and secrecy as a way to cover and justify this authoritarian streak. There is a very authoritarian core to this Government which sits very uncomfortably with its use of terms like freedom and liberty.

We have a government that is prepared to take measures which we would have thought unthinkable five years ago. What they are doing is trying to stifle any dissent against government policy. Take Greenham Common. The Government protests that all the things they have done about Greenham Common have nothing to do with the right to protest against nuclear weapons. They first have the local council try to evict them, they then tried character assassination against the women, as if littering the Common were more important than the momentous issue about which they are protesting. Now all of a sudden they want to build a road, and they really ask us to believe it has nothing to do with those women's rights to protest, but clearly any reasonable man or women knows this is exactly what is happening. There has been a series of decisions to prevent trade unions from exercising their dissent from this Government's policies and their dissent at the workplace. We saw an attempt to bring lie detectors and political vetting into national security areas in the civil service, and then, having not achieved their goals, the Government went right to the heart of the matter, the right to join a trade union at GCHQ. We've seen also a series of leak enquiries to prevent the press from publishing information which is against government policy. What we are seeing is a subtle change in the definition of national security, from anything endangering the nation's security to anything damaging government policy. Nobody would pretend for a moment that the information that Sarah Tisdall released had anything to do with national security. What it had to do with was opposition to government policy; it caused the government embarrassment. The action against the Kent miners is another illustration. All of these are examples of government activity which seeks to prevent dissent from its policies.

This is the 50th anniversary of the NCCL and a Charter of Rights has been launched. Do you accept the suggestion that this is a sign that the NCCL is moving to the right in attempting to capture the middle ground? Is there not a conflict between different conceptions of civil liberties held by liberals and held by socialists?

I think that undoubtedly there are particular issues over which civil libertarians of a socialist or liberal persuasion will have differences of opinion. But I do believe there are certain basic and fundamental civil liberties principles which span the political spectrum. They are mentioned in the Charter of Rights. Such rights as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, anti-discrimination, and privacy are basic civil libertarian concepts which are above party politics.

Do you think we are dealing with absolutes or that liberties and their values are historically determined?

I don't think we're dealing with absolutes. For any liberty that you can mention there is a conflicting right on the other side and civil libertarians have to balance them. The way that they can be balanced is that, for example, a person has the right to free expression until the point where there is an imminent danger to another person by causing violence or inciting racial hatred.

And is the striking of that balance an exercise that in part is politically determined?

I think civil libertarians strike the balance on the concept of 'imminence'. Take the Kent miners as an example. It is one of the most astonishing assaults on civil liberties to stop a Kent miner 300 miles from a picket. On the other hand, if any human being, whether it be a police officer or a miner, were at the point of joining the picket waving a truncheon, that would be the point that I would be prepared to say that expression of opinion is in conflict with someone elses's rights.

That way of picturing it is not dissimilar to John Stuart Mill's harm principle. And it is simple to identify 'harm' or 'danger' in your example. But where there is competition between rights which may harm the economic or political interests of another group, can the 'harm' principle determine the decision between conflicting liberties?

An organisation like NCCL, focusing upon civil liberties concepts

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needs to accentuate these civil liberties principles. From an organisational point of view, I think that it needs to try to stick to a civil strictly liberties approach that it will fight for with determination and integrity. Yet personally I have very acute recognition of the conflict between social and equality rights on the one hand and pure civil liberties on the other. I would personally take on certain issues which I don't think it appropriate for NCCL to be involved with. There are social equality issues which I don't think come within NCCL's role.

What distinguishes your narrower category of 'pure civil liberties', and other forms of social liberties?

Take the example of welfare benefits. I have a long tradition of fighting for welfare benefits, but I don't think it's NCCL's role to say that the child allowance should go up. However, if one particular group were to be discriminated against in the giving of that benefit, then that would be a civil liberties question as an anti-discrimination issue. The welfare movement has to recognise that NCCL can make its strongest contribution by speaking with determination and integrity on civil liberties issues. On the other hand I personally believe that equality as a concept is as important as freedom.

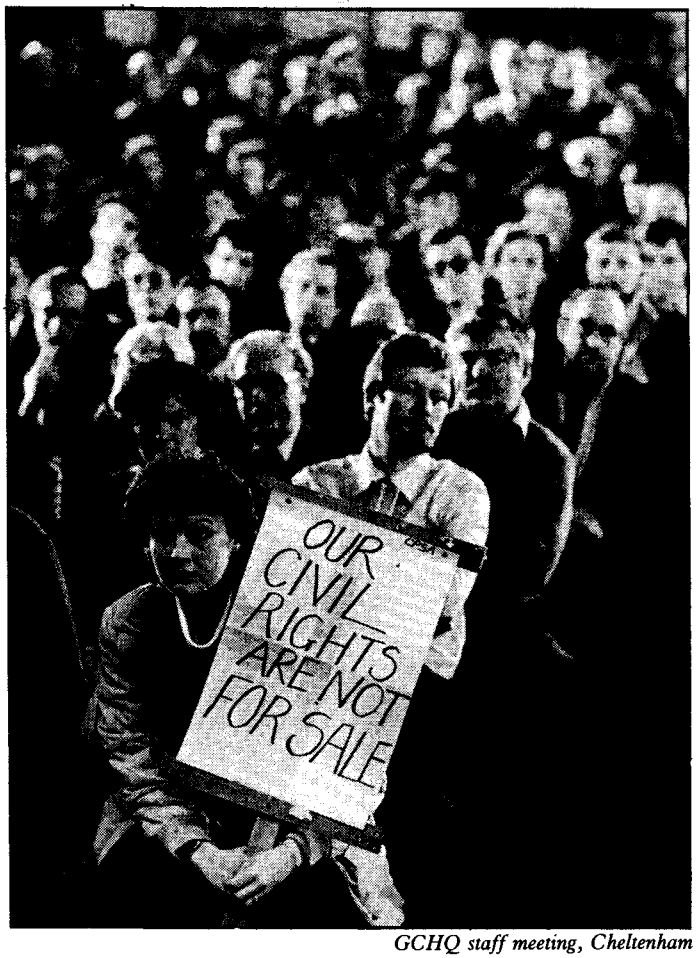
You suggest that the NCCL should stick to the defence of core liberties; yet one of the most successful areas of NCCL's work in the last decade has been the branching out into areas such as the inequalities which women suffer. Now, in the example you gave of family welfare benefits, the latter are an integral part of the larger issue of women being denied equality in employment and other fields. Do not such issues identify an expanding field of civil liberty work?

The NCCL's women's rights work is one of the most important areas of endeavour that we have gone into. But there have been many difficult issues that we have had to grapple with in women's rights work. For example the freedom of expression would conflict with the freedom of advertising to exploit women on billboards and in magazines. The position that NCCL has taken is that it will energetically oppose discrimination against women and it will also draw attention to the exploitation of women. But it also has to balance that with the general defence of freedom of expression. I sometimes as a person see the social equality issues as much more important than the pure civil libertarian principle. But nonetheless I would continue to maintain that the NCCL is correct to focus on the civil liberty principles of the Charter.

But it is possible that if 'balance' is your governing concept as between competing liberties, you are going to find yourself confronting situations where you cannot strike a balance, where you have got to take sides. How do you strike a balance between the right of the Bengali community in Spitalfields to live free from fear and the right of the National Front to organise and to march through Spitalfields? Surely the NCCL has got to say which of those two rights it considers to be more important.

I hope it never seems that the NCCL doesn't find itself anguishing over conflicts of rights. Civil libertarians seek to locate the 'balance' by saying that people have the right to freedom of expression until there is an imminent interference with the rights of another group. By applying that principle it allows us to protect the rights of free expression of groups that I do not personally like to hear express their views. We must be very cautious giving the right to those in power to decide who can speak and who cannot. History has shown us that it is groups to the left that are muffled, not groups on the right.

Now specifically about the National Front. The NCCL advised members of the NF on two occasions: the advice was brief, suggesting to them that they should seek their own legal advice. The first issue concerned the detention of a member in a lay-by for several hours while they were on their way to an anti-IRA march; the police action was much akin to that involved with the Kent miners. The second occasion was when an NF member's home was searched by the police, and his family photographs and address book were seized in a way similar to the search of Duncan Campbell's home, and the offices of Friends of the Earth. In all of my years working in civil rights and civil liberties, I've never been so personally upset and distraught by any single issue. To have any association with the NF, that ugly, deplorable group — I have no words to begin to express my disgust. I would first like to get the record straight. The *Guardian* suggested that it was a decision that I took to move the NCCL towards the centre. In fact that is quite untrue. The NCCL, ever since the 1960s, has had a policy of free expression so that in the 1960s it defended the rights of both socialists and right wing groups to hire halls to have their meetings. It is not that I have personally chosen to take NCCL along this direction. The policy is going to be reviewed by the executive and the AGM and by the time this interview is published that policy may have been revised.



GCHQ staff meeting, Cheltenham

Let me say why NCCL has adopted its policy. The NCCL ever since it was first founded 50 years ago has been one of the groups at the forefront of the fight against fascism and racism. When I was appointed to this job that was where I wanted to strengthen NCCL's work. I wanted to move NCCL into the area of

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anti-discrimination, but now this has happened it's obviously going to take a great deal of rebuilding to be able to do that. NCCL's position has been that the best way to fight fascism and racism is not by proscribing groups and banning marches but by exposing their lies. To give the power to the government to decide who will and who will not speak is very dangerous. It will be those on the left who will be silenced and not those on the right.

It's one thing for NCCL not to want to see formal bans on anybody because of their views, it's another thing to assist an organisation which, under protection of that liberty, has promoted views which are injurious to the liberties of others whose views I think every member of NCCL would rate more highly. Isn't there a distinction?

Yes. And I think yours is the strongest intellectual argument on the other side. What I have difficulty with, as you do, and as I think all of NCCL does, is giving aid and comfort to an organisation whose very existence is inimicable to the civil liberties of others. There is no possibility of balancing the very real daily experience of racial hatred and discrimination with the theoretical principle of free speech. But the issue is whether you can best fight racism and fascism by drawing up lists as to whom you will and will not advise. Once NCCL decides it will never advise a group whose very existence is inimicable to civil liberties, then NCCL has to start drawing lines about who it will and who it will not defend or advise. Is the IRA that type of an organisation? Is a Protestant group in Northern Ireland which has religious hatred as part of its doctrine? What about revolutionary groups from the extreme Left? The difficulty is to define which groups are wholly inimicable to the liberty of others.

Does not this general problem arise because you have already ranked the principle of freedom of speech as taking priority over other rights? Why does freedom of speech take priority over the freedom from racial abuse?

Anti-discrimination *is* as important as freedom of expression and I wouldn't want to say that one had priority over the other. And I've made it absolutely clear that in my own personal perspective the racial hatred that a black or Asian person wakes up to and lives with day after day is the more important. But do you actually prevent that racism by having bans or preventing freedom of expression? I would suggest not. Stopping people from speaking does not prevent the grotesque evil of racism.

It is necessary to draw a distinction between what laws the supporters of civil liberties would like to see or would rather not see, and what NCCL itself must adopt as the important causes. NCCL can only succeed as a civil liberties organisation if it has the confidence of those who most need its help. Can I return to this question whether our perception of liberties is historically determined. One can say that in the 1980s the right to picket has become one requiring defence because it is under attack. Similarly the right to live free of fear of racial abuse is today a fundamental question in Britain.

Fundamental human rights do not change but certainly priorities change. And whenever the NCCL decides on a particular direction it should go in, it should be aware of those priorities and it should give help to those most vulnerable that need help. The fundamental right of assembly and to picket now indeed is under attack. I sometimes despair at the mass media in this country; they actually do not accept the basic and fundamental principle of freedom of assembly and freedom to picket. NCCL's greatest contribution to this debate is to defend absolutely and as a question of principle the right to demonstrate dissent whether in the workplace, or from government policies. But this does not require the NCCL to get involved in industrial disputes and to say, for example, that we support the miners and not the Coal Board. That is what trade unions are for and that's why they need to be strong. NCCL's job is to make sure that they have the climate of opinion and the fundamental right to exercise those freedoms.

What happens then if there's a repetition of what happened in the 1950s on British Rail where a colour bar strike took place — white workers refused to work with black. It's capable of happening again. Would NCCL stand back or take sides on that issue?

We would take sides — on the basis of the principle of anti-discrimination. Only in that sense. It wouldn't matter, for example, whether the employers were wanting integration and

Police stopping pickets' car during the NUM dispute, Ollerton, Notts

certain sections of employees were wanting segregation or the reverse. We would be sticking by the principle of anti-discrimination.

In your answer you have said that the principle of anti-discrimination is in those circumstances a higher principle than the freedom of workers to organise collectively and to take strike action for whatever objectives they specify. Doesn't this conflict with what you have argued about the fundamental principle of freedom of expression?

NCCL could not and would not say that the workers in that particular issue did not have the right to take strike action. But if it occurred, and I was with NCCL, I would have no hesitation in siding with and advising those who were suffering discrimination. I would think NCCL's position would be clear on such an issue.

There are a number of freedoms which the political centre and Right hold to be every bit as self-evident and important as those we have been talking about and which NCCL, no doubt because of its history, does not give priority to or indeed include in its charter. Take, for example, the freedom of individual enterprise. Will a move on NCCL's part to broaden its base lead it to consider the adoption of such liberties?

Emphatically not. My intention is not to take NCCL into the centre stage of politics. All I believe to be doing is to press the long-standing NCCL policy which is that there are certain

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freedoms which go beyond party political boundaries.

Is freedom of enterprise one of them?

No. I do not know of any respectable civil libertarian principles that say freedom of enterprise is a civil liberty. I think I see it in much the same way as the issue of welfare benefits, as actually a social issue; I don't believe that corporations have civil liberties. I believe that people do.

What the proponents of freedom of enterprise would say in answer to that is that it is the individual's right of enterprise which they may carry on through a corporation or individually. That is the individual's right. Where, they might say, does the NCCL stand on this, if the NCCL wants my subscription? For example, let us consider the right-wing opposition to what they regard as illiberal restrictions on freedom of enterprise such as the Rent Acts or fair trading legislation. It is a view which propounds the liberty of enterprise as a greater good than the social restrictions placed on it.

I do not believe that state interference with capitalist enterprise has anything to do with civil liberties. To me it does not involve any fundamental human right.

I don't think so either, but the political Right would. Is not the better response to argue that in a society in which power resides in one particular class, that class can be left to take care of itself. The proper concern of people concerned with liberties is that those whose interests are opposed to the governing groups should be protected as much as possible?

I see that as a persuasive argument but it's not something that I would agree with.

Is there any other theoretical underpinning for the attitude you've expressed about what are and what aren't civil liberties?

NCCL has published a charter and in that charter it does not include the right to free enterprise, nor does it include the right to social benefits. I think any position one takes in the civil libertarian field will have its inconsistencies, its conflicts. I believe that NCCL's position is one that stands on fundamental principles which civil libertarians have for many decades defended. Other social equality principles need to be debated in the struggle between those who are in authority and those who are not; but I don't think that should be NCCL's contribution.

Can I question you a bit on one specific example of the conflicting liberties problem? Let's take the issue of the pre-entry closed shop. The question is whether or not taking employment should be dependent on doing something that the individual may not wish to do. In your perspective, is the pre-entry closed shop a curtailment of individual liberty?

The NCCL does not have a policy for or against the closed shop as such, but it does distinguish between pre-entry and post-entry closed shop. I abide entirely by conference decisions on that matter but I will stick my head on the chopping block by saying that I personally believe that NCCL would be a stronger organisation if it did not favour the closed shop. I say that coming from a trade union background, but looking at it as a civil libertarian. In any case, I don't think it is in the trade union movement's interests that the NCCL should defend all of the interests that trade unionists defend, rather NCCL should defend the primary freedoms of trade unions such as the right of association, the right to withdraw labour and the right to picket.

Do not these difficulties of drawing the line between competing rights illustrate the fact that civil liberties are historically determined? Civil liberties have traditionally been seen as individual rights and that is because they have been, so to speak, the liberal face of an individualist society. As a result very scant regard has been given to collective rights. One of the problems is that civil libertarians continue to disregard collective rights; and to say that if such rights come into conflict with individual rights then it is the individual rights that must prevail.

The historical perception that you have put forward is undoubtedly true. A civil liberties organisation in a society with socialists in power might develop rather differently. The kind of organisation that NCCL is reflects its history, reflects our fighting fascists 50 years ago and all that that meant. So I don't deny what you say, that it is historically determined. But I don't believe that there's a justification for disregarding these fundamental principles of individual liberties by shifting towards a collectivist view. I think we must still defend the rights of individuals. I think if we did stop doing that we would have a much more repressive society at the end of the day and that repression would fall on the Left rather than the Right. So I think it is essential to stick by these principles. Nor do we only defend individual rights. Where we help best is providing a climate where collective assembly and the exercise of trade union freedoms can be respected and defended. If you didn't have civil liberties in the traditional sense that I have talked about, I don't think you would have trade unions. We have a poster that says that if this government's employment law was in force in Poland there would only have been six pickets in the Gdansk shipyards; that expresses the civil liberty perspective well. □

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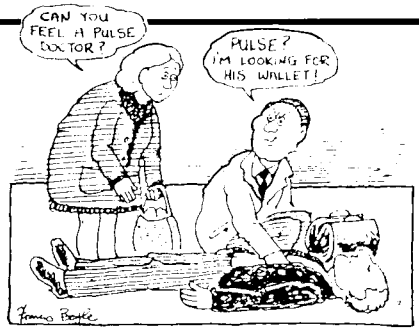

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The pattern of unionism is changing. Once it was concentrated in the heartlands. Now it is more widely dispersed. Things are now very different.

Mapping out the Unions

Doreen Massey and Nicholas Miles

THERE WERE DEFINITE geographical bases to the trade union movement in Britain in the immediate postwar years. To a large extent the pattern reflected the geography of industry. It was, quite clearly, a trade union movement based in a capitalism which was overwhelmingly urban and where different parts of the country retained their individual industrial specialisms. It was a pattern, too, which provided quite particular conditions for union organisation.

During the period of postwar growth, through to the end of the 1950s, the broad outline of this geography was largely reinforced. But since then it has begun to change quite radically. Over the last 20 years major shifts have taken place. While some unions have seen substantial growth in new parts of the country, there has also been massive decline in many of the old areas of strength — a decline which has been dramatically reinforced over the last five years.

Today what is emerging is a more widely-distributed geography of union membership, both overall and within individual unions. We hear a lot about the decline of the heartlands of the trade union movement, and it has been happening. There has also been decentralisation to new areas. And there has been growth in new, more widely-dispersed trade unions.

What we present in this article is some evidence of these changes in the geography of trade unionism in Britain. Our evidence is tentative in the sense that we have not looked at every union, though we believe we have looked at a representative selection.[1] But if the patterns which are emerging so far are in any way general, then they are very significant.

At the broadest level what they imply is a major shift in local conditions of organisation. The new areas and regions are different from the old. Moreover the very process of change can itself present difficulties, as old-established centres of organisation become more marginal, at least in numerical terms, to a union's strength, and new areas begin to assert their increased weight. What is more, the membership in the new areas is being built up, not in a period of postwar boom, but in a period of restructuring and retrenchment. Put all this together with the other changes which are going on within the unions — shifts in the balance between unions, shifts in the balance of skills and industries, and shifts in gender composition — and one can understand feelings of uncertainty, even a loss of identity. We may mourn or celebrate the changes, but they are certainly a lot to cope with. The purpose of this article is simply to provide some evidence about one aspect of this transformation.

THE DECLINE OF THE HEARTLANDS

In the immediate postwar years, then, trade union membership in Britain was concentrated in the cities and in particular regions of industrial concentration. Many individual unions were overwhelmingly based in just one or two parts of the country. In particular this was true of unions organised in specific industries. In 1951 nearly half of NUTGW's (National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers) membership was in London, Leicester and Manchester, half of NUFLAT's (National Union of Footwear and Leather Allied Trades) members in the shoe industry were in the East Midlands, more than half of GMBATU (General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union) was along the Clyde, the Tyne-Tees and in London, and three quarters of the NUHKW (National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers) were in the Nottingham and Leicester area. Some unions were even more concentrated into particular localities: the Association of Textile Workers (ATW), for instance, was exclusively confined to the North West of England. The NUM, of course was synonymous with the coalfields.

These are all unions which organised in specific industrial sectors, and their geography simply mirrored that of the industries in which they were based. But other unions, even though they might spread across much of manufacturing industry, were still overwhelmingly concentrated in the main areas of nineteenth and early twentieth century British capitalism. The AUEW (engineering section, and its forebears) is a classic example. In this earlier period half its members were in five areas: London, Lancashire, Birmingham-Coventry, South Wales and the Glasgow-Paisley area.

It is these geographical bases that we have termed the unions' 'heartlands'. They varied between unions. In some parts of the country a single union might organise most trade unionists — the coal and textile areas are the most obvious examples. But in other places the heartlands of the different unions overlapped to form bases of trade unionism more generally — above all this was true of the cities. Since the 1960s all these varied heartlands have, in one way or another, been seriously eroded.

In part this dramatic overall loss reflects the decline in total membership of unions which were almost entirely confined to particular areas. But it is also the result of differential patterns of loss and gain. What is striking about the changing geography of membership in these unions is that it is their old bases which have seen the greatest proportional loss of membership. The timing has varied considerably between unions, but overall the pattern is clear. Figure 1 shows the geography of loss and gain over 30 years for the garment workers; and the same tendency to a flattening out of membership between different areas is repeated in a whole range of other unions. In the AUEW, for instance, the shift in balance has been quite dramatic. In 1951, the union had over 3,500 more members in

> We may mourn or celebrate the changes, but they are certainly a lot to cope with

[1] We would like to thank the many trade union officials and members who provided us with information and guided us through the pitfalls of interpretation.

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its old base areas (London, Lancashire, Birmingham/Coventry, South Wales and Glasgow/Paisley) than in the rest of the country; by 1979 these areas had 120,000 *fewer* members than what had once been the union's periphery. Moreover this shift has been dramatically reinforced through differential patterns of decline since 1979. Between 1979 and 1981, total membership of the AUEW fell by 17%, but the decline in its heartland areas was 22%.

But even in the earlier postwar period not all unions were so tightly defined spatially. General unions, such as the GMWU, and unions more directly related to population distribution (mainly service sector unions such as USDAW) had much more widely dispersed geographies of membership. To the extent that their members *were* clustered, though, they were again in the cities, thereby adding to the urban element of the concentration of the union movement as a whole. What is fascinating is that trends even within these unions are reinforcing the tendency towards a more dispersed geography. For even here membership is becoming more dispersed. In 1961, 28% of the GMWU's membership was in the urban areas of the North West and its London and Eastern region and only 20% was in the whole of the North and Scotland. By 1979 these magnitudes had been almost reversed. A similar shift happened within USDAW.

So one of the things which the trade union movement is having to cope with is the absolute and relative decline of many of the geographical areas which used to be the bases of its strength. In itself this is some kind of loss of identity, of history.

If one city stands out as having suffered from declines in almost all these unions, it is London

By no means all of the areas of numerical strength, of course, were areas of militancy, still less of political radicalism. The dominance of localities by single industries and single unions can as easily lead to paternalism and class complicity (and concepts of the economy of 'our region') as to independent union strength. But some of them were the geographical heart, symbolically and organisationally, of the movement. In different ways this has been true of some of the coalfields, and of the complex of car-industry-related unions in the Midlands. Different again have been the cities. Tony Lane has written of the rich texture and diversity of the network of unions which made the cities so good for (certain forms of) organisation.[2] And, inevitably, because they were home to so many of these unions, it is the cities which have been hit particularly hard. As ever, the process has been differentiated. The Birmingham area remained relatively buoyant until the late 70s when the manufacturing union base of many other cities had been rocking for years. Its present decline is very much a phenomenon of Thatcherism. If one city stands out as having suffered from declines in almost all these unions, it is London. The timing and rate of decline has varied between unions, but the combined effect is startling. And (it is getting tedious repeating the point) since 1979 the collapse has been disastrous.

WHY HAS IT HAPPENED?

So what lies behind these enormous post-war changes in the geography of these unions? To some extent the shifts reflect organisational changes within the unions themselves. There have been mergers and amalgamations, and changes in recruitment strategies. But more importantly there have been massive changes in the sectoral composition, technology and geographical organisation of industry itself. These changes have been complex and multifarious but, in order to get a broad picture of what has been happening, we have identified three crucial components.

The decline of older industries

First, there has been straightforward industrial decline. It has hit different sectors and unions at different times as the deindustrialisation of Britain has spread through successive generations of industry. Among the first to decline were old labour intensive, and characteristically female-employing, consumer goods industries. Increasing imports and a wider international reorganisation of production had dramatic effects on the clothing, shoe, and textile industries and consequently on NUTGW, NUFLAT and the ATW.

The decline of other industries, for instance engineering, began in the 60s and 70s, taking with it sizeable chunks of unions such as the AUEW. Finally, deindustrialisation has also affected the geography and internal composition of the more general unions. The decline of the EEPTU in Merseyside, Humberside, South Wales and London between 1974 and 1983 is related to the fall in membership in the older manufacturing sections of the unions. Similarly, the decline of the GMWU in London, especially in the 60s, is associated with the steady destruction of that city's manufacturing base.

The search for cheaper labour

In response to intensifying competition there have also been geographical shifts. Within Britain there has been a movement both out of the major conurbations towards smaller towns and from the central regions towards peripheral areas.

The changing geography of the NUTGW clearly shows this process. Figure 2 tracks the changing balance between the original geographical base of the union and the rest of the country from the early 50s to the early 80s. The old base shows continuous decline but, before the post 1979 collapse, there was an absolute growth in membership in other regions. The clothing industry, trapped between low cost imports and rising competition for labour in its established locations, moved to new areas — the North, Scotland, parts of Yorkshire and Humberside, Northern Ireland, the South West, East Anglia and the outer South East — in search of cheaper labour. The same pattern can be seen for instance, in the case of NUFLAT.

Similar kinds of spatial restructuring have occurred in other industries, particularly in engineering. Here, though, the processes and their timing have been different. Figure 3 plots the course of events for the AUEW. The union grew in total membership until 1979, as did both centre and periphery of the union's geography up to 1971. Only after 1971 has growth in the periphery been at the expense of the old heartlands. But when actual movement *has* occurred it has been not just to find cheaper labour, but also to escape *well-organised* labour. The numerical strength of the heartlands has been associated with an organisational strength which itself has become part of the reason for its own relative decline.

In other unions yet other reasons underly the decentralisation of membership. In USDAW, for instance, it seems likely that some of the present-day greater geographical spread is due not so much to the movement of industry as to the movement of population. Here the pattern of decentralisation is primarily towards less-urbanised areas.

Changes in production process

There have also been considerable changes in the technology of production. The introduction of automated and computerised equipment has in many instances reduced the numbers of skilled manual workers

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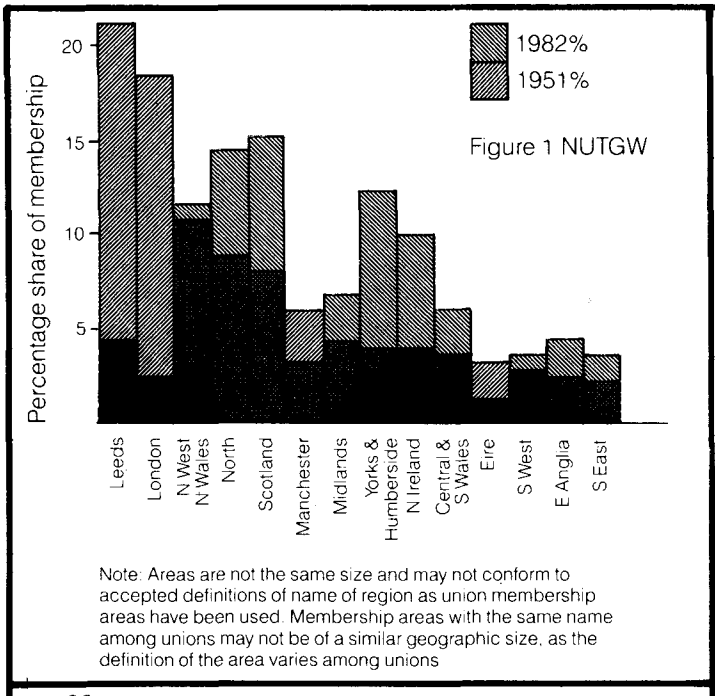


Figure 1 NUTGW

Note: Areas are not the same size and may not conform to accepted definitions of name of region as union membership areas have been used. Membership areas with the same name among unions may not be of a similar geographic size, as the definition of the area varies among unions

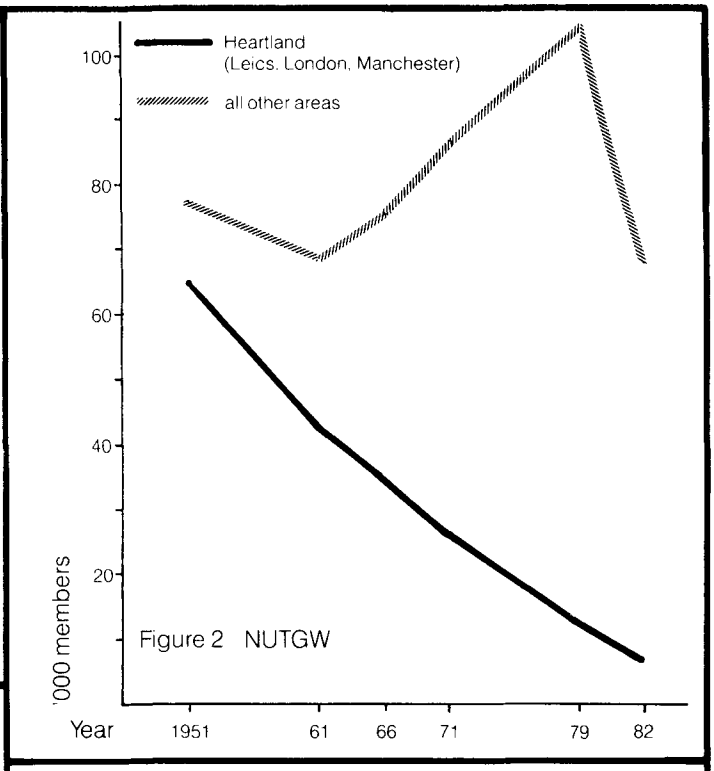


Figure 2 NUTGW

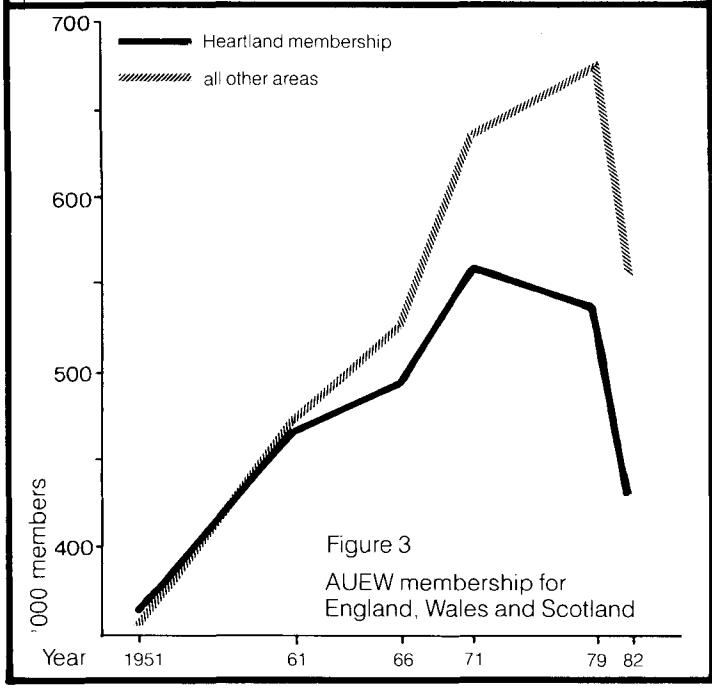
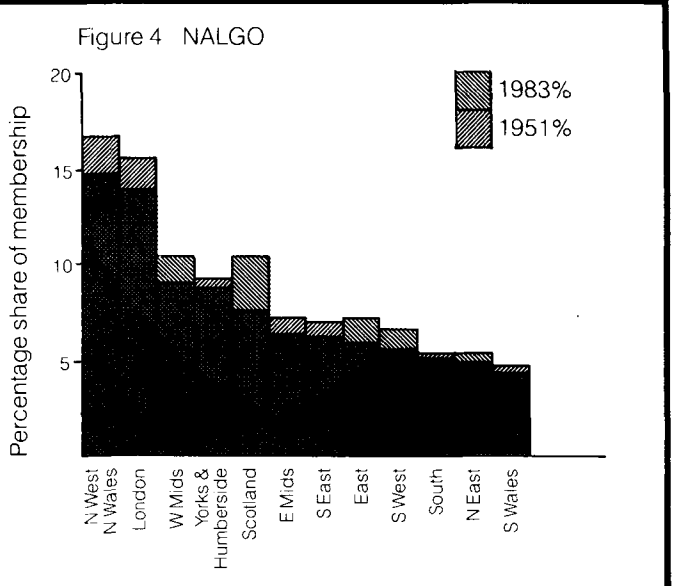


Figure 3
AUEW membership for England, Wales and Scotland

Figure 4 NALGO



while increasing the numbers both of technicians and of relatively unskilled 'machine minders'. This process has been yet another to affect detrimentally the older 'craft' unions within manufacturing. But it has been associated with increases in unions representing technicians and general workers. Sometimes these changes have taken place within the same plant, or the same locality. In other cases, though, they have been associated with changes in location. Indeed, once again, geographical mobility can make life easier for management, especially when technological change implies potentially disruptive changes in work-process, skill definitions, and the social composition of the workforce.

The reflection of this process can be picked up, not only in the changing balance between unions representing different types of workers, but also in the changing membership composition even of individual unions. Within the GMWU, for instance, there has been a dramatic rise in female membership. Feminisation often — unfortunately — reflects the downgrading of skills. And in the GMWU it has been greatest in those areas, particularly Development Areas, to which there has been decentralisation. Since the 1960s the proportion of women members in the North, Scotland and South Wales has risen faster than anywhere else. Feminisation is also, of course, due to changes in the sectoral composition within the union (from shipbuilding to local government and food and drink, for instance). The point is that together they have brought about significant changes in both the internal composition and the geography of the union.

Summary

Examination of the processes behind the patterns reveals even more of the complexity of what has been going on. First, it is clear that geographical shift has not just produced new problems for unions to deal with and new conditions to organise in. It has also been actively used as a weapon *against* trade unions. Second, it is not only that unions are faced with new geographical

[2] 'The Unions: Caught on an ebb tide' Tony Lane *Marxism Today* September 1982.

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contexts in which to organise; at the same time there have often also been changes in the labour process (themselves often an attack on labour, regardless of location) and in the social composition of the workforce. Finally, there is a further element of change, to which we now turn.

THE GROWTH OF THE NEW UNIONS

Changes in geography have been brought about also by the growth of other unions, in particular the white collar unions which have expanded both within the public sector and outside. Both the initial geography of these unions and subsequent developments have reinforced the changes we have been talking about.

Take first the public sector unions. By their very nature they have been spread across the country. Moreover their growth has been associated with a shift in the balance of their membership from the conurbations to surrounding regions. For NALGO (National and Local Government Officers Association), between 1951 and 1983 the gains in membership outside the London, West Midlands and North West conurbations were greater than those within them (see figure 4). For NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) regional membership data, which is only available for dates after 1970, shows a similar pattern. Between 1971 and 1983 the share of membership in the union's 'periphery' of the North, South West and Wales increased from less than 7% to over 20%.

There are a number of reasons for the increasingly dispersed nature of the public sector unions. First, there are important georgraphical differences in union traditions. In the case of NUPE's health service membership, union officials pointed out that it is generally more accepted and expected for nurses, for instance, to join a union in Scotland than it is in some other areas. A second factor promoting dispersion is the general decentralisation of population from conurbations. Moreover, there have been significant changes over the last decade in the allocation formula applied by central government in distributing resources among regions. These changes led in the 70s to greater emphasis on public services in 'problem' peripheral regions. Since 1979 the decentralisation has been more from conurbations to less urbanised areas, as the shires have benefited at the expense of metropolitan areas.

Taken together, the increase in membership of the public sector unions (between 1951 and 1983 NALGO and NUPE together grew by over a million, over half of this increase occurring since the beginning of the 70s) and the increasingly dispersed nature of the unions highlight their growing weight in the new geography of the trade union movement as a whole.

White collar unions in the private sector were more concentrated than those in the public sector, but not as concentrated as the craft or industry unions. Moreover, these unions, too, have become more evenly distributed. For AUEW-TASS (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section), between 1951 and 1982 the proportion of the membership in London and Manchester declined, and although that for the West Midlands increased so did the proportional share for the South West and South Wales, Northern Ireland, and Southern England.

Similarly, the membership of ASTMS (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff) has recently become more dispersed. Whereas the proportion of membership in the West Midlands has markedly declined over the last four years, the decline in the West, the North, and central Eastern areas has been smaller and there have been gains in East Anglia and Northern Ireland. The recent decline in membership in London, as in the West Midlands, is related to the collapse of industry. Ironically, however, one characteristic of Britain's role in the world economy is the strength of financial services. ASTMS membership in this sector has been growing and has, to some extent, compensated for the union's London losses in manufacturing.

what is being built looks like being very different

NOT JUST A NEW GEOGRAPHY

The changes we have been discussing reflect shifts in social structure, changes in the composition of the paid workforce, and a radically restructured geography of the British economy as a whole.

Yet there is one final factor to be considered. What is needed in the face of all this is — to be banal — a positive, imaginative response. The problem is that the new geography is being constructed under very different conditions, economically and ideologically, from the old. The old geography grew along with the growth of the British economy. Today the very reason for the new geography of industry (both deindustrialisation and decentralisation) is the changing, mainly declining, international competitiveness of much of British industry. Two serious consequences of all this are already evident.

First, the combination of high unemployment, declining union membership, and the increased geographical flexibility of industry sets off a desperate competition for jobs between workers and regions. In that context it is not just a new geography, but new structures of unionisation within plants, that are being established. Single-union arrangements are the most obvious example. The problem is that these changes are generally being introduced on management's terms rather than the unions'. Nissan is one of a number of recent examples.

Second, evidence on non-unionisation is harder to come by, but the problems of organising within 'growth sectors' are well known. Foreign-owned electronics multinationals are one example. The 'high-tech' belt of southern and eastern England is another. In these industries, and particularly in that part of the country, an individualistic ideology of 'high-status' workers, and anti-unionism, is strong. In that context, the GCHQ episode might have wider — and longer-term ramifications than can yet be identified.

Responding to such a situation demands both strength and imagination. And what is being built looks like being very different. □

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Unemployment is seen as the most serious problem facing Britain. But the labour movement's solutions are not seen by the people as credible. If they were, the implications could be enormous. Now is the time to look again at our priorities and policies.

Full Employment: Slogan or Strategy?

John Grahl

UNEMPLOYMENT IN BRITAIN is still rising. Late last year the totals seemed to have stabilised: in 1984 they have been creeping upwards again, in spite of various statistical manipulations by the Government.

One particularly alarming factor is that the rise in unemployment no longer results in a direct way from falling production. Output has, in fact, been rising quite fast in Britain for some months — at the historically high annual rate of 3%. Yet, because of continuing labour-saving measures in industry, this growth is, so far, not even holding unemployment steady.

In the medium term future there is another disturbing problem. Unemployment has been rising fast throughout West Europe, but it has been falling in the United States where a boom which began in late 1982 has drawn millions back into work. What is alarming is the quality of the new jobs that are emerging in the US — there is a proliferation of low-paid, insecure employment in newer service activities, together with major defeats for organised labour in older sectors and a continuing fall in trade union membership.[1]

Thus, besides the present increase in unemployment during a recovery in *output*, there is a worrying precedent in the US of what a recovery of *employment* under free market auspices could involve. There have been several signs that the Tory government in Britain sees the growth of badly paid, unskilled, service sector jobs as a desirable 'solution' to the unemployment problem.

This long run persistence of mass unemployment, and the effects of unemployment on those still at work, are the most serious economic problems facing the country. And they are clearly perceived as such by the majority of the population. In spite of attempts by the Right to focus resentment on taxation or other issues, the evidence consistently points to unemployment as the source of deepest concern for most people. Everyday experience reinforces these anxieties — there can be few families in Britain by now which have escaped completely unemployment and the insecurity it spreads.

Fatalism

Yet this widespread and deep concern has not been reflected in support for the economic analysis or the proposals of the labour movement. The general election showed that Labour's economic policies were often seen as unconvincing or irrelevant. Although a few years ago it was assumed that unemployment at today's levels would be disastrous for any government, cynicism about Labour's alternative allowed the Conservatives to survive in office. And there are continuing problems in formulating Labour's economic policy — as witness the poor showing of the opposition during the budget debates.

For some people, cynicism about alternative policy is reinforced by a kind of fatalism, itself related to the recession and the resulting preoccupation with individual survival, deepening political apathy.

> full employment has to be the overriding priority in both economic and political terms

Breaking through that fatalism and establishing labour movement policies as an effective response to the central issue of unemployment are the most important political tasks of the next few years. To exploit the biggest potential weakness of the Right and to rebuild a majority for progressive policies, full employment has to be the overriding priority in both economic and political terms.

This article argues that the issue of unemployment has not yet been given the necessary priority by the labour movement because the extent and duration of the problem have not hitherto been realised. Sometimes the measures proposed to deal with it have been inadequate in economic terms. Sometimes counter-measures have become entangled with and obscured by other very ambitious political objectives: this was particularly the case with the Left's alternative economic strategy (AES) where the restoration of full employment came to be linked with, and in practice subordinated to, long run aims of a decisive shift of the system towards socialism.

An important aspect of this failure to prioritise full employment sufficiently has been the tendency to discuss the issue in technical terms with employment as an economic variable to be correctly manipulated. The *ethical* side of the question has not been fully developed.

Direct job creation

In terms of *economic policy*, the labour movement's usual answer to unemployment has been to go for very *high rates of economic growth*. To stimulate this growth the key policy instrument was to be the expansion of *aggregate demand*, that is injecting extra purchasing power into the economy in order to raise spending. The increased spending would then lead to a growth of output and therefore a growth of employment. Thus a return to full employment was seen as coming through, and as a result of, a successful high-growth strategy.

It will be argued here, however, that high-growth strategies, however desirable, now face such serious obstacles that they are no longer plausible as solutions to unemployment except in the very long run. To keep demand-led growth as the central theme of economic policy would, in effect, mean postponing full employment until a complete and general solution to the economic crisis had been found.

Therefore, if employment is to be given

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the priority which it requires, the main emphasis should be put, instead, on *direct job creation*. By this is meant the use of public money to fund directly the wages and other costs of an increased number of jobs.

It may prove impossible to finance a large number of such additional jobs through a general rise in incomes and more rapid economic growth. It follows, therefore that in the first instance job creation will have to be financed by redistributing existing income. Thus direct job creation programmes need to be linked to effective measures to redistribute income towards those at present unemployed as well as other low income groups.

Although the change in strategy suggested here would not be without problems, a commitment to full employment via direct job creation has major political advantages. During the life of the Tory government, which uses unemployment as an instrument of economic control, a much more direct opposition to present policy could be mounted — demanding a different use of existing resources, and not having to base higher employment on an increasingly implausible promise to engineer a massive extension of output within a short period of time. Policy would be stronger in that effective reductions in unemployment under a Labour government could be *guaranteed* — preparing the way for the introduction of a *statutory right to work*.[2] The new policy would also express in a much more direct way the moral values of the movement — its commitment to greater equality and social solidarity, defending low income groups and the unemployed.

The argument here, it should be stressed, is not about the kind of jobs to be created but about the way in which they should be financed, if rapid economic growth is not feasible. Although the term 'job creation' is used in different ways (and has been used to cover some pretty unsavoury practices by this government and others) the reference here is to *trade union organised jobs at negotiated rates of pay*.

Labour and high-growth solutions

Throughout the 70s and into the 80s, as the trend of unemployment continued to rise, the labour movement tended, almost automatically, to call for an expansion of aggregate demand —an injection of spending power into the economy by tax reductions or general increases in public expenditure. The use of this kind of demand stimulus to increase output and hence employment was the standard 'Keynesian' weapon to deal with unemployment. The movement's reliance on this approach reflected its positive experience of economic and social advance in the Keynesian political economy of the 50s and 60s, the era when aggregate 'demand management' seemed to offer effective economic control.

In the increasingly unbalanced economies of the 70s and 80s, demand-led growth was increasingly difficult to obtain — but this was the tried and tested policy instrument and the movement still depended on it.

What exactly are the critical obstacles to demand-led growth? Surely there are abundant resources lying idle and kept out of production by the lack of spending power in the economy? A superficial answer is just to point out that such strategies have not worked well in recent years: each attempt to stimulate Western economies in this way has run into serious problems of inflation and the balance of payments. The last rigorous attempt to get growth going in this way in Britain was the 'Barber boom' of 1972 under Mr Heath's government. It fed a frenzy of speculation and price increases, without generating many jobs.

It is clear that one fundamental difficulty with demand stimulation in a single country is the international nature of the recession and the consequent intense pressures of competition on world markets. As opposed to the 60s, when high-growth strategies tried to raise British performance to the buoyant levels of Western Europe, today the same strategies run counter to widespread recession, with the

the main emphasis should be put, instead, on direct job creation

countries of Western Europe in the same boat: potential export markets are stagnant; and there is intense price competition even for home markets.

But these adverse international conditions may not be the only obstacle to demand-led growth. Even in a closed economy (a single country or a group of countries insulated from outside pressures) high-growth policies can be blocked by structural problems — by a mismatch between the structure of production and the pattern of demand — which hold back growth even when there are a lot of unused resources. Indeed, *besides* external constraints, there are today also serious imbalances within the Western economies which would affect, for instance, even attempts to expand demand in the European economy as a whole.

The weakness of the AES

Within the labour movement the Left too has placed great emphasis on aggregate demand: the Left's alternative economic strategy (AES) gradually developed since

[1] See Mike Davis 'The Political Economy of Late-Imperial America' *New Left Review* 143 Feb 84.

[2] See Mike Rustin 'A Statutory Right to Work' *New Left Review* 137 Jan/Feb 83.

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the mid-70s, sees high growth as the primary answer to unemployment. In this respect the AES has been continuous both with the policies of the previous period — the 50s and 60s — and with the thinking of the movement as a whole.

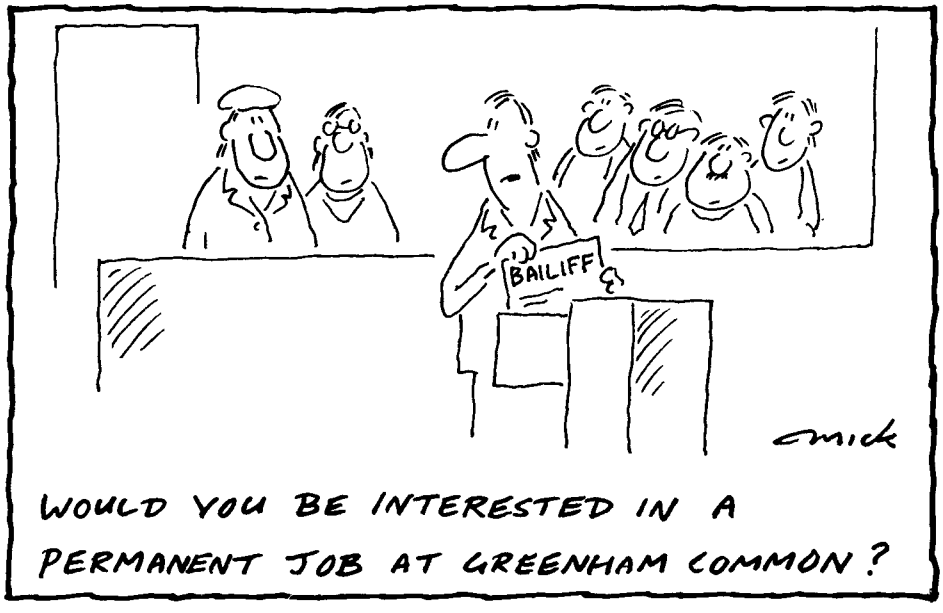
As the difficulties of this approach became increasingly apparent, the AES was specified more carefully in ways that tried to anticipate and counter the constraints on a massive expansion of demand. To achieve this, the Left argued for *controls* on a very wide scale. For instance, import controls would permit the British economy to grow without a rapid deterioration of the trade balance; foreign exchange controls would stop nervous wealth owners shifting their property abroad; controls over the credit system would be used to stop expansion feeding into speculation; price controls would prevent high levels of demand from unleashing inflation; while compulsory planning agreements in big companies together with nationalisations would prevent a decline in investment.

Now although the case for each of these controls was very logical, the somewhat paradoxical result of putting them all together was that the Left ended up by proposing a very radical increase in state economic power in order to sustain a rather traditional policy of growth via the stimulation of demand. This line of policy development — high-growth plus controls — became increasingly problematic.

The political problem was that the AES in this form could only be legitimated by a popular acceptance of state economic power not much less than in a centrally planned economy. But no actual political developments seemed to be moving in this direction, even though large-scale and effective direct interventions to tackle unemployment might be regarded as completely legitimate by a big majority of the people. Interventions in the labour market are one thing — the drastic expansion of state power called for in radical versions of the AES was much more problematic, and in fact never commanded widespread support.

Economically, the difficulties with high-growth strategies are well illustrated in the discouraging precedent of Mitterrand's France, where an attempt at demand-led growth rapidly went wrong. At home investment slumped, while increasing difficulties with the balance of payments led to three devaluations of the franc. Nor was unemployment much reduced. The expansion launched after the Left's electoral victories in May and June 1981 was, as a result of these problems, first halted and then reversed, by the beginning of last year, while unemployment was still around 2 million.

The French experience must be taken seriously as a sign of the economic difficulties facing demand-led growth. Of course it is always possible to argue that greater political determination and a readiness to use much more state control could have made the experiment work. But such arguments simply bolster economic wishful thinking with similarly voluntarist politics. The French government under Mitterrand nationalised all the private French financial institutions and six major manufacturing groups. If this did not give the government sufficient leverage to expand the economy, then what measures would be required? And how could one sell them politically?



The same dilemma arises in the British case. In origin the AES was a limited strategy, based on the use of a stronger public sector and a number of new controls to solve certain economic problems. But as the difficulties with high-growth strategies became more obvious, the AES could only retain economic credibility if it was backed up by maximalist politics and a readiness to deploy very extensive state controls. If the primary economic method was to be demand-led growth, then there seemed to be no version of the AES tough enough to work and at the same time mild enough to command political support.

Redistribution

It is not suggested at all that the labour movement should respond to the problems by lowering its sights on employment policy, by aiming for fewer jobs, or for jobs of lower quality. On the contrary, in many ways existing Labour policies are too passive and gradualist. The essence of the switch being proposed here concerns the way in which job generation should be financed. Finance on the necessary scale cannot come from high growth and rising incomes in a way which is painless to everyone. Thus *redistribution* is central to direct job creation. New jobs for the unemployed can be financed by redirecting public expenditure and by taxes on higher incomes.

The first implication of this view is the need to challenge and reverse existing policies which have led to a dramatic concentration of income and wealth. The Government claimed that redistribution towards the rich would generate employment. There is no evidence for this claim, except that increases in very high incomes might encourage low-grade service activities as a modern equivalent of the domestic servants of Victorian times. The tax cuts for the rich have squandered resources which could finance thousands of jobs in the public services.

A very ambivalent advantage of high-growth paths to full employment is that they *suspend* redistributive issues: out of a bigger cake there can be bigger slices all round. If this kind of policy is no longer plausible then sidestepping distribution is a dangerous luxury. A serious attack on high incomes is a precondition for rapid reductions in unemployment.

The scale of the unemployment problem, however, means that redistributional issues cannot be confined to 'the rich' versus 'the rest'. Starting from unemployment at present levels, some four million jobs would have to be found. This is a conservative estimate since the general

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availability of decent employment is likely to bring forward many more job-seekers. Even with highly cost-effective methods of job creation, sums approaching £20 billion per year would be needed.

It would not be feasible to raise these amounts of money without widespread levies on existing employment incomes. In effect, there would have to be transfers of income *among* the working people — from the middle strata and the higher ranges of working class incomes to those at present unemployed and other low-income groups. It is a premise of the present argument that effective measures to eliminate unemployment could make a significant increase in the general burden of taxation politically legitimate. If such levies were accompanied by a serious assualt on economic privilege and the defence of low-income groups they could prove very widely acceptable.

The retreat from redistribution by Mr Callaghan's government — especially the humiliating failure of the proposed wealth tax — weakened the moral position of the labour movement and encouraged an aggressive right wing approach which favours the rich. Yet this toleration of wealth and poverty could be a major political weakness of the Right, since few will accept the assertions of right wing philosophy that 'social justice' is a meaningless expression. Demand-oriented economic strategies have been escapist on these issues and failed to exploit the weakness.

What kind of programme?

In what sectors and by what means should large scale job generation be attempted? The answer clearly depends on the political context — moving from the present where initiatives are only possible in the very limited framework of local government, towards a full national Labour programme. The aim below is simply to illustrate some of the most important considerations.

The first need is to maximise political support for a serious attack on unemployment. This requires that the social benefits of the new employment be as high as possible, that the working of the new programmes be seen to be fair, and that they contribute to structural adaptation in the economy rather than delay necessary changes. Programmes should support new jobs in both private and public sectors.

The most cost-effective and manageable strategy would involve a range of different programmes: some permanent, some temporary and therefore able to release labour in the long run if necessary; some programmes aimed at specific groups such as school-leavers or the long term unemployed, some recruiting from the workforce at large. The range of programmes would make it possible to adapt the pattern of job creation to the needs of the workforce and in accordance with the value of each type of intervention.

A highly cost-effective measure would be a simple, permanent expansion of public services — the NHS and local social services. Improvements in the quality and availability of widely used and appreciated services would make the whole strategy more acceptable.

Public investments — particularly construction and reconstruction of roads, other infrastructure and homes — is already a longstanding demand of the trade union movement. Similar proposals come from a very wide range of political positions. This kind of job creation is substantially more expensive than in the public services; on the other hand it can absorb a lot of labour very quickly and the non-labour input — building materials— is produced in Britain.

Measures which work in the opposite way to reduce the supply of labour rather than increase the number of jobs are justified if they genuinely widen the range of choice which people have. An obvious example is the removal of barriers which stop unemployed people from studying full-time.

The existing 'special employment programmes' often disguise unemployment rather than provide real employment opportunities. Therefore to upgrade them to an acceptable level would amount to an increase in employment. By far the most important case is the Youth Training Scheme; with a rigorous assertion of the rights of the young people involved and substantial additional funding, this could become an effective and socially progressive job programme for school-leavers rather than the squalid and dishonest expedient which it often is today.

> the main emphasis should be put, instead, on direct job creation

In the private sector, measures are only efficient if subsidies are precisely targeted on additional jobs, not those which would exist anyway. Rescue operations for failing enterprises are a very dubious use of money except as a temporary emergency measure. The Greater London Enterprise Board and other local government agencies are acquiring valuable experience of intervention to promote private sector jobs. (More generally the dogged but pragmatic defence of employment by Labour controlled local authorities all over the country is the major precedent for the policies being put forward here.)

There should be no bias against jobs in small business, although it is difficult to monitor success in the small business sector. Nor should there be a commitment to manufacturing as against the private service sector. It is increasingly clear that large scale public investment in new industries may be needed to accelerate structural adaptation of the British economy, but the private sector also must make a maximum contribution.

In every case, rates of pay and conditions of work should be *negotiated* with trade unions. Although, clearly, pay in the new jobs would be generally below that of the best paid workers today, it should at least match the TUC's claim for a national minimum wage and would represent a very important improvement from the present plight of low-paid, weakly organised sections of the workforce.

Conclusion

It must be admitted that an emphasis on direct job creation rather than demand-led growth would, in some ways, mark a retreat for the Left. Many of the most ambitious proposals for rapid change in the socio-economic system which have been put forward in the Left's AES would no longer be applicable to immediate policy. (It is by no means suggested that the AES demands for more economic controls and greater public ownership be abandoned; but it is argued that these demands can no longer be the starting point for the development of left economic policy.)

The retreat, however, is more apparent than real because the Labour Party, in spite of pressure from the Left, was never within miles of actually campaigning on the core demands of the AES. In June 1983 only the most diluted form of traditional demand stimulation was put before the voters. In the interests of 'realism' the Labour manifesto aimed only to reduce unemployment to one million within the lifetime of a parliament (presumably this target depended on the Labour government not being 'blown off course' in the habitual way). The Left's AES was always in the background — it was the only coherent position available to the movement — but, in practice, its radical demands were never won.

In some ways, the job creation approach only makes the present situation explicit. The movement does not have a complete

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answer to the crisis — the policies proposed are therefore necessarily an expedient, although not an unprincipled one. They amount to defending low-paid groups and sustaining employment in the face of the crisis, even if the crisis is not rapidly resolved. At the same time the dangerous potential development of a 'recovery' based on extreme inequality would be decisively blocked.

It is not argued at all that demand-led growth be abandoned as a policy theme — we need every atom of such growth which is available — but it is argued that demand expansion can no longer logically, or morally, be the centrepiece of our economic policies. Since practical presentations of Labour policy already acknowledge that demand strategies are a part solution at best, the proposals here tend more to fill a policy vacuum than to displace a coherent existing strategy.

In more important ways the policy changes proposed would represent an advance by the Left towards a more effective engagement in British political life. The changes would mean that, for the first time in many years, values and objectives would be given more prominence than instruments. The aim — full employment and decent working conditions — would take precedence over the techniques of demand management. Certainly, major concessions could and should be made to win broad agreement on the methods and design of specific programmes — but these concessions would be linked to the most forceful insistence on full employment, not as a long run possibility, but as an immediate necessity. The objective of a statutory *right to work* would signal this commitment to everyone threatened by unemployment or economic insecurity and could only reinforce the relevance of the Left's position. □

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The working class, contrary to popular myth on the Left, has never been intrinsically socialist. And the myth is even less true today.

Class Conundrum

Gregor McLennan

AS HEADS ARE PUT TOGETHER to 're-think' the future of the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the Left in general, the call goes out to put thoughts into action. Some would say that the 'pessimism' of the Left's think tank positively precludes the other side of Gramsci's famous couplet: optimism of the will. There can be no complacency on this score. Why is it that the 'so what do we do, now' sections of acute analytical articles feel like the air has leaked out of a bright balloon?

Yet there is a danger here which we should avoid, of believing that serious reflection at best precedes the charge into action, and at worst deflects real strugle. On the contrary, fundamental analysis should accompany, harness, and direct renewed practical energy. With that point in mind, I want to focus on the basic idea of class politics in the context of socialist strategies. Many of the valuable contributions to recent issues of *Marxism Today* on Labour's current crisis have touched on this question; the debate may benefit from a treatment of it in its own right.

The crisis facing Labour and the Left is certainly to do with the force of Thatcherism's assault on the postwar social democratic consensus, and with the dramatic loss of Labour's votes. But beneath this, it is the very idea of a politics based upon assumptions about the working class which is at issue. One of the notable features — probably *the* feature — of Labour's electoral decline has been its loss of support in the manual working class, 23% of whom (according to survey data) changed their vote from Labour between 1979-1983. Consequently, Labour's traditional perception of the relationship between class and party is less adequate to a changing reality.

Indeed, socialists in general are having to adapt and alter their conceptions of class politics, in two main ways. First, in response to the changing structure and culture of the working class. Increasingly, little of direct political significance can be deduced from the fact of being working class. This is a relatively recent historical problem for the Left. A second weakness has roots further back, and that is that when a strong conception of class politics dominates, *non-class* issues tend to be marginalised or even scorned. The Marxist tradition in particular has always found non-class issues politically uncomfortable.

Occupational change

To gain a sense of the challenge facing the traditional conceptions, we need to focus on the character of work tasks, their sectoral locations, and their cultural ramifications.

In proportional terms, the numbers of workers employed in agriculture, fisheries, mining, and textiles has been reduced by over one half in the twenty years from 1961 to 1981[1]. Under the Thatcher era this rate has certainly accelerated. In the metal trades, there have been job losses of perhaps one third in the same period, and manufacture as a whole now accounts for only 28% of work. Craft or skilled manual labour has been reasonably estimated at only 18% of all work tasks. Within manufacture, the great heavy industries have declined sharply, being replaced, if at all, by lighter advanced technology requiring fewer workers of various kinds.

The service trades, by contrast, have grown from just over ten million people in 1961 to thirteen million in 1981. Among these, transport has declined in importance (though not dramatically), whilst public administration has grown slightly. However, professional and scientific categories account for a substantial jump from some two million jobs in 1961 to about four million today. The numbers engaged in banking, insurance, and the like have almost doubled. As far as gender is concerned, women are now about 40% of the workforce, two thirds of women workers being in the service trades.

Overall, then, there have been major changes, some of which will be irreversible. The size of the workforce has been reduced, and within that total the proportion of 'productive' workers has fallen. There has been a lightening of onerous physical work in some manufacturing areas, and a relative growth in labour-intensive services. The range of work experience has consequently broadened, and though a number of tasks have been 'de-skilled', it is also clear that the 'slavery' of wage-labour is less apparent than in earlier phases of capitalism or in many other countries of the world today. And at least amongst the (widening) band of technical, professional, and administrative workers, there is a significant degree of individual autonomy over the direction and pace of work.

These structural changes make the political complexion of the working class less certain to estimate. There cannot be many socialist households which have not been disrupted by inconclusive arguments about the consequences of adopting the 'broad' or the 'narrow' definition of the working class! In my view, this question has been settled for some time. The priority given in analytical terms and in political weight to productive labour in general, and to manual labour in particular, requires revision. Productive labour — that work which directly produces 'surplus value' — now involves less than 30% of working people. The productive labourers in the new technologies will come to bear little resemblance to those in heavy industry. For the rest of the 'broad' working class (the collective labourer of hand and brain), it is a necessarily heterogeneous collection. It includes the low paid hairdresser, but also the well paid doctor; the downtrodden shop-assistant, but also the lower ranks of management. Finally, the important recent literature on women's role in the labour process and the home make it plain that ideas of class based on men's manual

> Increasingly, little of direct political significance can be deduced from the fact of being working class

[1] Central Statistical Office, *Social Trends*.

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labour, or which take class to be reflected by the 'head of the family' will fail to grasp the politics of gender *within* the working class itself. In sum, the idea of a spontaneous class politics arising from a typical kind of labour is much less convincing that it once was.

Sectoral and cultural politics

In terms of sectoral and cultural change, similar conclusions can be drawn. The state is now the ultimate boss for one third of the working population, divided almost equally between the public corporations, central government, and local government. Now the work performed in the state sector is not necessarily different in character from that in the private sector, but the employee/employer relation is different. The time-honoured picture of workers in struggle against *private* capitalists must therefore be radically altered. Publicly owned companies may or may not be governed by the criterion of profit-making: this will depend somewhat on the type of utility, and on the politics of the party of government. And public companies are liable to be judged as national assets in a way which few private firms are. In its administrative branches, the identity of the state as an employer is even less assimilable to that of the capitalist firm. The politics of the complicated relationship between public and private spheres in this sense cannot be brushed aside — as it is for example in the simplistic proposition that since the state is a *capitalist* state all the workers remain in principle subject to the tyrannies of private capital.

Sectoral location is thus coming to be recognised as an independent factor which can help explain some recent voting patterns. The Labour Party, for instance, is less popular amongst manual workers in private industry, but it is heavily supported by state sector workers. This has less to do with an identification with Labour based on *class* considerations, and more to do with the fact that Labour is the party which defends, for good or ill, a large public sphere and nationalised industries. For that reason too, it attracts a higher proportion of the public service 'middle class' vote, as compared with private industry.

In the cultural realm, the number of hours worked, the forms of flexitime and paid and unpaid leave are changing to the benefit of working people. This enables them to structure the working day, week, and even year more in accordance with their needs and desires. Whether regarded as good or bad, the leisure industries have come to play a greater part in everyone's lives. Of course, the picture of enjoyment and affluence conjured up by the idea of more leisure is more real for some than for others. For every golden handshake or freelance occupation there are many more squalid redundancy payments, pensions, and social security cheques.

Yet on both counts, the socialist movement has to act if it is not to be politically disadvantaged. As Stuart Hall outlined in January's *Marxism Today*, the politics of leisure is a challenging area to which the Left is only reluctantly and belatedly beginning to respond. One particular junction of class and culture seems to me important for our perceptions of shifts in working class life: the disappearance of apprenticeship. This traditional mode of entry into the male working class is virtually non-existent today. Gone too, therefore, is one of the major ways in which class-conscious workers are formed and active socialists recruited. For many years this channel of socialisation into craft labour values and class solidarity overlapped with other influences on young people. Now it has been replaced by the various subcultures of the school, the dole, and the training schemes. Here too, politically, the Left has struggled to cope with new social developments. Many are left blinking in puzzlement about how to relate to the diverse and sometimes exotic concerns of the young working class. This general problem is exacerbated by the historic decision of a majority of unemployed first-time voters to avoid organised politics completely by not turning up to the polls. We must assume that they regard all options at the ballot box as intrinsically manipulative. In one sense this is a positive sentiment of suspicion — as it is with many black and Asian people. But socialists are in no better a state to benefit from and channel this distrust of the system than are the Tories.

they regard all options at the ballot box as intrinsically manipulative

Class interests

The shifts in the types of work, its location, and its cultural consequences mean that some of the preferred socialist images of the working class may be more of a hindrance than a clue to political advance. The main image is that the labourer hews out of the very earth, by sweat and blood, the wealth which sustains us all. It is a powerful, resonant tribute to certain forms of wage-labour, and perhaps more accurately to *peasant* production. However, it contains a dubious element of inaccuracy and moralism. By comparison, the vast majority of jobs look different, and many look positively 'decadent'. And the implications of a gendered division of labour make it difficult to accept as appropriate the herculean virtues of male extractive strength which the image conveys.

In the context of these problems, the idea that a common class identity will assert itself over the differences only helps to confuse the issue. This is especially the case where the existence of deep rooted working class *interests* is invoked for political effect. There are three main ways in which class interests are claimed to direct political forces.

The first is the reformist conception that in return for their electoral allegiance, the Labour Party will look after the interests of working class voters. Obviously, this perspective has some impressive historical evidence to commend it. Until quite recently, the political culture of manual labour sustained the party's efforts to secure non-revolutionary advances for working people, both in terms of material conditions and political clout. Actually, the golden age of 'alignment' between Labour and the manual working class can be exaggerated in both depth and span, but certainly from the 1960s on, there has been a period of serious 'de-alignment'. Even by the later 1960s it was estimated by political scientists that the typical image of Labour voters — those who left school early, joined a union, rented a house, and worked manually — applied to barely a fifth of the electorate. How much more patronising and inaccurate today is the Labourist conception of a passive class whose affairs are understood exclusively by the Labour Party? At least the 1983 disaster at the polls has caused some radical reconsideration.

The second version of class interests puts the working class in a much more *active* light. The basic idea is that working class experience brings it daily up against the intrinsic hostility of capitalism. Through the labour *movement* this class experience can be galvanised and turned into an anti-capitalist drive. Such an idea lies behind programmes aimed at creating an 'anti-monopoly' alliance, for example. Despite its richer view of class politics, this version assumes a too-direct connection between workplace grievances and anti-capitalist politics. Also, its reliance on the traditional labour movement and 'core' working class leaves it vulnerable in the face of the changes in class composition mentioned earlier. The basis of recruitment into the

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new 'big battalions' of labour is likely to shift further away from an obvious sense of anti-capitalist class interests.

The third version is to assume that the interests of the working class can be expressed politically in terms of socialism itself. Tony Benn, for example, holds that to vote Labour is to express commitment to socialist change. The class structure will always ensure a majority reservoir for that socialist appeal. Now few would deny that this picture is a congenial one. But it is rampant wishful thinking. It seems manifestly not the case today, for one thing. But also, it again reflects the general fallacy of the idea of 'class interests' — that you can, from a consideration of economic class position, speculate that socialist politics, now or later, will be perceived to be at the heart of people's needs. That rather determinist asumption affects also the Marxist tradition, and it is no longer clear what political benefits are gained from its adoption.

A range of issues

I have certainly not been arguing that class or class interests are no longer relevant. There remain vast differences in wealth and power in Britain which should be politically central. And the 'new' working class is certainly not a totally metamorphosed breed, as any glance round some of the new town estates will confirm. There is no question, then, of recommending that the Left abandons Glasgow to home in on Dorking as the melting pot of the new politics. Yet it is a mistake in judgement to maintain that the labour movement and working class are the same as of old, that deep down they share a profound anti-capitalist interest which socialists alone can winkle out. Even the most cogent of observers of the persistence of class divisions accept that class position fails to supply a ready-made agenda for socialist politics.[2]

In practice, I think that most socialists know these things, but they have been reluctant to risk the impurity in openly saying so. Consequently, I'd want to stress that there are key issues which are non-class based, as well as those which are class-based. There are clearly *workplace* matters to do with conditions, and wider class questions of pay and jobs. But there are also *consumption-based* demands and aspirations to do with the quality of services, the nature of leisure, and the provision of housing and transport. Whilst these are certainly related to class, they are not directly centred around production — the crucial notion in the Marxist definition. If we are to confront the shifts from production towards services and consumption, these questions must be accepted as having a dynamic of their own, and they will bring into political contact an increasingly diverse range of people. Then there are *non-class* issues. These might include law and order, patriotism, and other questions which have often been claimed by the Right as their home ground. But non-class issues would include the plethora of democratic concerns, gender issues, and peace. So they are not intrinsically unprogressive or minority matters.

If we accept this kind of distinction between different sorts of interests, it becomes clear that there can be no single political channel at the political level for their expression. Instead, there should be multiple forms of organisation and representation: campaigns, pressure groups, locality councils, unions, clubs, and political parties. Not all socialists or activists will choose to be in political parties, and there will probably be more than one left party. In all probability, then, coalitions are going to have to play a greater role in political life, both between formal parties, and between different kinds of organisations and movements.

Pluralism

The often-scorned notion of pluralism is part of this scenario. Pluralism should not be thought of as simply the liberal idea of being tolerant to enemies or of letting everyone have a say. It refers to the existence in social reality itself of a series of different contradictions or sites of struggle. These may overlap: amongst those so far mentioned are production and consumption, class and non-class issues, public and private spheres, and gender divisions of interests. The extent to which they do overlap will largely be the product of the way in which they are worked through politically. Similarly, pluralism is not intrinsically a matter of *cross*-class alliances; but the extent to which alliances can be forged in and across the diversity of working class life, or connected to more narrow class questions, is a political issue of some subtlety, not a fact about the 'interests' supposed to exist in the social structure itself.

One upshot of this way of thinking is that Labour's recovery at the polls should not be worked for as merely a way of bringing the whole working class back in line behind the electoral party *of* the class. This has proved a misleading conception in the past, and will not materialise in the future. Indeed the very idea of one party being the exclusive authentic spokesperson of the working class or the people is a faintly absurd and dangerous one — whether it

[2] Eg, John Westergaard 'Class of 84' *New Socialist* Jan/Feb 1984.

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applies to the Labour Party in Britain, communist parties in the socialist countries, or the nationalist parties in Africa.

Parties, especially left parties, remain crucial however. Their role should be to mobilise the people into *self*-activity, and draw together the common strands of popular action, at the representative level. In this way leadership can be provided through cohesion and unity across diverse interests, not by seeking to define and delimit them according to a privileged, assumed, identity.

Non-class issues,let me say,are eminently issues which working class people rank as important. But they are not best described as class issues, because they affect everyone regardless of class, and they are important to working people as *citizens* rather than as workers.

The Tories have been a step ahead of Labour in this area, and on that basis have always secured a good one-third of the working class vote. This is sometimes, patronisingly, termed the 'deference' vote, as if humble people willingly succumb to the wisdom of their social betters. But the working class Tory vote represents the Conservatives' long-standing ability to appeal to some traditional non-class issues, which are then tied into the moral framework of capitalism and social reaction.

One such traditional concern has been law and order. Despite some valuable historical and agitational work in this area, it remains true that the Left does not have many *constructive* ideas about how to handle anti-social behaviour. Our attitude to state policing is, quite rightly, negative, in the sense that there is an ongoing need to monitor police behaviour and to advertise the discrepancy between its image and its conduct. But we are also negative in the main about victim-oriented support schemes, probation facilities, forms of community policing, and neighbourhood watches. There is a general danger here of thinking that any enemy of the police is a friend of ours, and that the only cure for crime is socialism. If this is to be overcome, we are going to have to be more positive in our approach to the facts which statistics (even police statistics) tell us, to the worries of 'respectable' working class people, and to the real problem that forms of crime may be endemic to any complex society,not just capitalism.

psychologically and practically, we have not come to terms with its implications

Another central non-class issue where I think the Left is capable of winning important backing is democracy. Extensions of democracy are certainly in the interests of working class people broadly speaking. But no more than law is democracy a class issue *per se*. There may be short-term setbacks in coming to terms with this. The Labour Party for example would do even worse under proportional representation, and this note of panic has led some people superficially to argue that democratic issues like that must be subordinated to our old friend 'class interest'. Yet it is clear that in the long run, these terms of debate should be addressed as intrinsically important, not just as the best way in the circumstances to present a class point of view.

It is clear that there is now widespread opposition to the anti-democratic core of Thatcherism. The growth of a militarised state, personal surveillance, removal of local councils, and curbs on trade unions: these developments will decide the future of politics in Britain as much as questions of monetarism, unemployment, or profitability. They are not for that reason more important than class issues or totally separate from them. But they do profoundly matter; like all non-class concerns they refer to things that arise as routine questions about the quality of life and access to power: things that can be confidently expected to arise in any socialist society short of utopia.

Conclusion

I have tried not to pretend that the articulation of class and non-class issues is easy, or is somehow an easy recipe for overcoming the serious decline in the traditional organisations of working class politics. It is certainly easy to exploit the *differences* between them. This is the approach of the Tories and to an extent the SDP — a supposedly 'middle class' party which has nevertheless won a significant block of working class votes.

Nor would I pretend that this necessary 'articulation' is new-fangled. The Communist Party, as I understand its programme, has for some time sought to bring together in an integral way a class perspective and an awareness of the indispensable role played by non-class issues and movements. But the weakness of the CP is a problem: its decline suggests (misleadingly) that it is the 'new' approach which is responsible. In fact, both the larger Labour Party and the revolutionist groups are weakening for the very same reasons, and they have stuck to the unrealistic and speculative scenario of class interests being expressed eventually at the political level.

My conclusion would be that if ever there was a realm of pure class politics, the nature of structural trends makes this unlikely to reappear in the same way in the future. A plausible socialism, in that sense, will not emerge if we think of it as the political reflection of the position of the working class in capitalist society. Objectively most of us by now have become aware of this. As yet, psychologically and practically, we have not come to terms with its implications. □

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Channel Five

MODERN DANCE

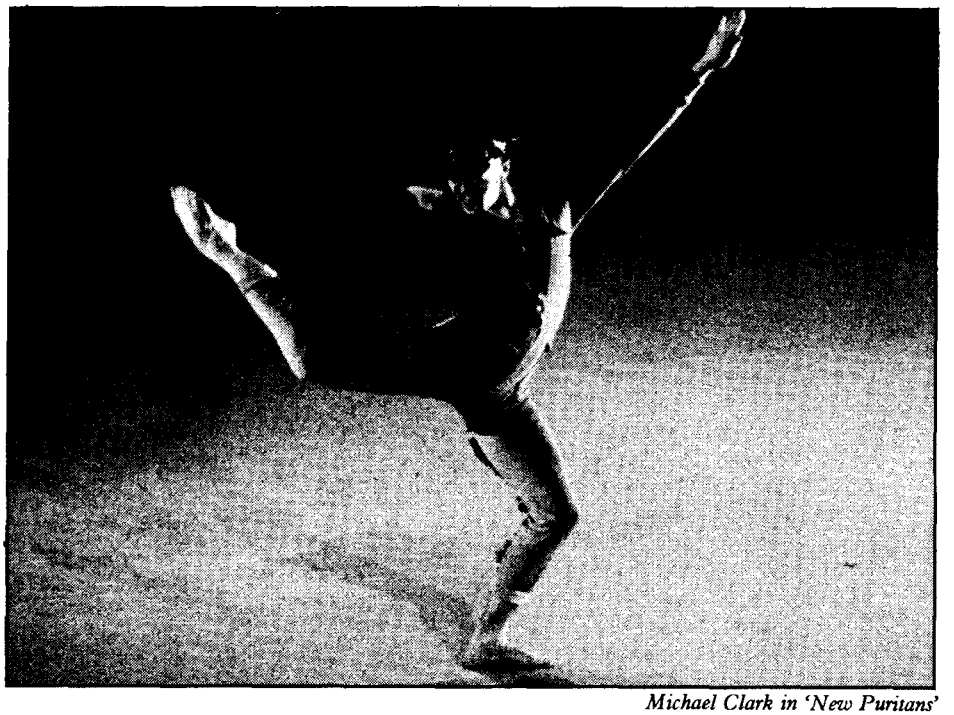
Chris Savage King

Dance has recently become our most rapidly developing art-form. It is nevertheless still regarded as marginal, both in the critical and general consensus. Its visceral appeal can often be dismissed as a mindless one: it is consequently allotted the meanest space on arts pages, and is perceived as being negligible in intellectual interest. To suggest that it has strong cultural, and thus political importance is to invite derision. For the masculine Right it is something with which to placate the wife and kids. For the Left it's elitest, effete and at best, irrelevant: an unfair and inaccurate assessment.

While a company like the Royal might justifiably be claimed elitest in that it is 'Royal', performs principally at the opera house, and comes in handy for a spot of cultural flag-waving, dance, at its most fundamental level, is the most egalitarian of art-forms. The selection and employment of dancers operates rigidly on a format of meritocracy: dance is the one art in which a discernible proof of ability is constantly demanded. Proficiency in dance is a talent curiously oblivious to class barriers and closed networks. Classes are not restricted in availability to a particular section of the community, and even the Royal Ballet School sends talent scouts to comprehensives.

Dance is also exceptional in being an art that attracts and employs an unusual majority of women. Female audiences exult in the rare privilege of constantly seeing themselves portrayed (however ambiguously) as active and central agents. For men, this results in an art-form which is somehow alien, an art-form that concerns itself rather too often with *them*. It might be a somewhat jaundiced observation, but in a male dominated society, this aspect alone could account for dance's minor status. It is interesting to note that when a male presence is acknowledged in dance, it is generally defined, in dismissive tones, as a homosexual one. This is puzzling, coming as it does from outside — from those who are not actually in a position to know whether this is the case or not. 'Real men', it seems couldn't possibly be involved in an art like dance. There's certainly something disorientating about its kind of appeal.

Dance's strength and importance lies in its explorative distance and its physicality.



Michael Clark in 'New Puritans'

It is perhaps something that an English culture, more and more extolling a masculine ethos, finds especially troublesome to cope with. There's dance's lack of obvious use, its irrational complexion, its appeal to the unconscious, its life beyond the circumference of empirical analysis. Dance's physicality is one which is ennobled by its qualities of human expressiveness. It, in turn, enables the expressive qualities of the human body to emerge and flourish. This is something which is entirely denied in everyday life, where physicality still tends to reflect competitive preoccupations. At an extreme level, we have physicality as brute force, finding its official sanction in military training. This is a quality, one would have thought, which is fairly expendable nowadays, but it is nevertheless subject to nonsensical celebration in its various derivations. In a more leisurely context there is physicality as competitive sport, and physicality as increasingly desperate attempts at physical perfection, involving a miscellany of activities from jogging to aerobics. Finally we have physicality as sex, currently constructed as an activity requiring hard work and a tangible success rate: a popular source of anxiety and, as it's marketed, an area for circulation of the crudest forms of sexism. Dance is a competitive profession and its successful practice requires hard work, but this is a means rather than an end. Dance, for its audiences, provides an abstract form of illumination, and connotes a pleasurable rediscovery of a physicality which, elsewhere, has been more strictly defined, more coarsely appropriated.

By its very nature, dance has constantly challenged dominant forms of thought and perception. Post-modern dance, hatched in the 60s, hoped further to disrupt prevailing modes of theatricality, technique and presentation. It was a protest in the realm of aesthetics. The movement broke important ground and produced some excellent choreographers. Often as not, however, it just meant that prevailing modes were being inverted in a pointless way, producing a dance art more solemn and static than that which it hoped to usurp. New dance in Britain has been more insidious in its subversion, and usually more accessible. Priorities of skill and professionalism, although more loosely defined, have recently been reinstated. Riverside Studios in London recently held a showcase season of this work, under the banner of *British New Dance*.

The work of the *Rosemary Butcher Dance Company* and *Miranda Tufnell/Dennis Greenwood* is a particularly puritanical

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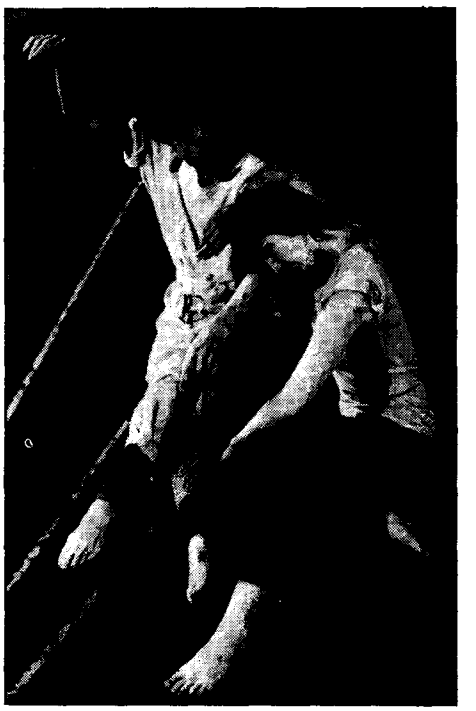
form, eschewing spectacle, illusion and virtuoso technique. It would be mistaken to call the movement qualities 'natural' — the term has been borrowed to describe at least four distinctly different dance styles this century, and it's time it was abandoned. Rather, they use a kind of minimalism where a tiny shift of one body part can seem enormous, while genuinely large movements achieve grandeur. It's a style at once loose in its use of weight and rhythm, yet extraordinarily intense in impetus. In a work like Tufnell and Greenwood's *World Rhythms*, where the movement is arbitrarily juxtaposed with the sound of volcanos, earthquakes and rivers, the human contribution can seem eerie and vulnerable. In something like Butcher's *The Site*, where the dancers can inflect their rhythms more forcibly, the movements convey a sensation of infinite power which can be deeply absorbing.

Are You Right There Michael, Are You Right? was Fergus Early's investigation into his father's colonial past. Slides and taped interviews with relatives were played over a series of dances which jauntily satirised the pompous stiffness and petty, hypocritical gentility of the epoch. It ended with the father back in Worthing, having been crippled in Korea, then taken to drink in despair. Early's slow and agonising exploration of this state contrasted drastically with the brisk and callous thoughtlessness earlier. It was a study in which the scrutiny of one life was extended into a minute examination of global issues.

The season ended with a variety of dances from new choreographers. Gaby Agis has produced exciting work before, but her *Surfacing* failed to sustain itself. Starting promisingly with dancers involved in anarchic fun — the chucking around of bits of metal in a riot of comically ill-tempered noise — it then developed into the kind of waffly improvisation more rewarding to do than to watch. The beginning of Gregory Nash's *Not Resolved* involved soft tumbles and dancers in clusters of slow motion tangles. This warmth and cuddliness was dissipated by the addition of some easy listening mush, matched by the dancers' group ensemble of predictable steps. From then on, it resembled a danced advertisement for shampoo.

The most devastating work of the evening was Michael Clark's *New Puritans*. A bright red spotlight scanned the stage and audience while *The Fall's* post-punk music blasted into the auditorium. Clark billowed across the stage and gobbed on the floor — a gesture repeated, at him, by his partner, Ellen von Schuylenburch. What followed was a fast and furious *tour de force*, incorporating moments of terrifying aggression, caustic wit and chilling suspension — the repeated sequence of an anarchy salute, goose-steps, a roll of the hips and a freedom sign turned over to 'up yours'. There was also a form of murmured eroticism in which movements of limp passivity, roguishness and ecstasy were exchanged confusedly between the partners. There was hard domination and tough resistance, intimate concerns that were infected with power struggles. Few art works could have depicted the broad disruptions of our age so intricately yet with such immediacy. None of it was literal. All impressions were conveyed by a radicalised and dynamic dance technique, performed with frightening vigour. It was a performance whose memories cut in on your sleep.

Dance is a valid source of enlightenment in performance, but in recent years has also provided new opportunities for diverse forms of active involvement. Most modern companies, in addition to choreographing and performing, run workshops and classes in which members of the public are encouraged to participate. Pioneering work in this field is threatened with constriction through government cuts and the abolition of the GLC. These will restrict all of dance's myriad activities, ones which, rare in the arts, actively involve 'ordinary' people and which, if allowed to expand, could transform not only ways of living but ways of thinking. In the face of more immediate requirements, the case for something such as dance can be overlooked. The case for a freer acknowledgement of physicality is a political one, however, and is worth fighting for, alongside more obvious concerns.



Miranda Tufnell and Dennis Greenwood

2-WAY COMMUNICATION

Joel Cayford

Non-broadcast video has found a special place in the toolkit of British management, and in recent years its planned use has been shown to be very effective, not only in education and training, but also for 'sharing information' with the workforce. Increasing sophistication in company video communications has played an increasing role in the management achievement of a range of objectives, such as workforce attitude-change, the implementation of redundancies, and the reduction of strike action. But the British workforce watches a lot of television, so company videos have to be very good to have the desired effect.

Last year one of the largest privately owned companies in Britain wanted to lay off 2,000 workers. It wanted to do it quietly and with minimum reaction. A plan centring on the strategic use of video was adopted. In the beginning a video programme was made and shown to the workforce through a rapid series of screenings to small groups. This first video described 'the company problem' and was presented by an interviewer normally associated with TV programmes about

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One of NALGO's videos

trade unions. A month later another programme was made and shown. It was about 'the company solution', and depicted some uncomfortable 'discussions' between an interviewer (who appeared to confront) and management (who appeared to sweat). The video programme went on to develop the arguments and led inexorably to the predictable, paid-for-by-management conclusion. Because the questions asked in the programme were typical of the questions that might have been asked by shop stewards (had they been given the opportunity), the effect was to occupy workforce ground and undermine the trade union position. The workforce were dismayed and defused, the redundancies initiated, and the management satisfied.

Video can be a powerful tool, and the trade union movement needs to understand how management are using it. But more especially, unions themselves can use video to aid the achievement of their own aims and objectives. Some unions have begun to explore the use of video, from training in health and safety issues through to education in current struggles such as privatisation and Tebbit-King law. NALGO recently produced a set of three programmes about privatisation in the health service as part of their 1983 campaign. One of the videos was short and punchy and was designed for public information, another which dealt with the arguments in more detail was used at union branch meetings, and the third was designed to be used by negotiators as support while presenting the arguments to employers. These tapes are now being used all over the country.

To communicate clearly and persuasively trade union videos need to be *very* good. They need to be fully researched and well put together both visually and technically. The technical quality of a video tape determines if it can be duplicated to make copies, or whther it can be broadcast on TV. But a broadcast quality programme will probably cost a hundred times more to make than a home produced video. Production requires a constant juggling act between cost, quality and audience demands. The NALGO tapes are distributed on domestic video cassettes, and excerpts have been shown on TV. NUPE has installed over £100,000 worth of video equipment to produce real-time records of conferences. Yet their set-up cannot be used for anything else as there is no programme-making or editing capacity within the union. It takes time, training and experience to make effective use of video, and to incorporate that use into existing structures. Unions already using video have gained valuable experience which needs to be shared so that newcomers to the technology don't have to fight the same battles.

It is not always necessary for a union to make its own videos. There are many organisations and groups both willing to work with unions in the production of programmes, and committed to passing on understanding and skills. The NALGO tapes were made in a collaboration between the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre (TURC) and the Birmingham Film Workshop. Many similar workshops and other independent film and video workers are working throughout Britain under ACTT recognition. Their practices are characterised by new and radical uses of film and video, and by arguments calling for the democratisation of the media. An example of this work occurred in a recent strike action in Merseyside, where the pickets were being subjected to police harrassment — possibly because the event was not under media scrutiny. A video team from the local Open Eye workshop visited the scene and set up their equipment. The police retreated without a shot being taken.

There are many ways in which video can be used by the unions: magazine format news videos, mass action information videos, political education videos, trade union executive communications videos, and workplace training videos. Much useful material already exists, and is being distributed by a variety of independent distributors. It is here where the crucial problem lies. It is not enough to produce only useful programmes. They must be seen to be useful, and they must be distributed to be seen. Distribution goes beyond supplying video to union branch meetings. TURC have distributed one hundred copies of the NALGO video programme throughout the union movement in Britain, as well as supplying copies to a video distributor in Australia, and to the public sector unions in New Zealand. (In a recent letter of acknowledgement they wrote, 'we have seen the future' — privatisation is two years away in New Zealand.)

British management are spending large sums on video based communications — both in terms of production costs and the capital costs of playback equipment for screeenings. At branch level shop stewards may have to counter a management video with a handful of pamphlets in the course of a worktime screening. Because works committee agreement is required before management are able to show the workforce a video, perhaps that agreement should be conditional on the unions having equal opportunities to present their views using the same equipment.

There is usually more to a successful

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branch screening than just playing a video. At times it makes sense to show more than one video to highlight different aspects of an issue. Video programmes by themselves rarely provide answers, but they are good at asking questions and getting an informed discussion going. Good communications are two-way communications. A screening without feedback is like a ballot without information. Grassroots feedback from shopfloor screenings is valuable and can be fed into the union's programme production and distribution policy.

For this struggle to be effective trade unions need to make programmes which can be used at branch and shopfloor level. This year a typical union with half a million members will have a turnover of about ten million pounds. About 10% of this will be spent on paper communications: pamphlets, newspapers, newsletters and postage. If 20% of that budget was put into video production then more than twenty programmes could be made and distributed annually. A proportion of general information videos could be made, along with other specific videos to meet the needs of special groupings within the membership.

The development of a distribution strategy is central to the use of video in trade unions. The strategy would recognise that broadcast TV provides an alternative distribution channel (if access can be obtained), and that it is useful to distribute original footage for use in other programmes to avoid needless extra production (many unions share the same concerns). A recent initiative has been the setting up of a steering committee called TU/TV by representatives from unions using video, independent video workers, and union resource centre workers. The committee is aiming to promote the use of video in unions and is holding a day school in early summer which will be attended by officers from the major unions in Britain (enquiries to TURC).

New technology is here to be used. Video is a flexible medium that can communicate well. If trade unions are gong to take education seriously then they need to take a good look at video, and consider the establishment of a video distribution network.

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

Deborah Cherry

The Pre-Raphaelites is an exhibition which celebrates artistic creativity as decisively masculine[1]. This exhibition brings together works by five 'major' male artists — Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti — and their 'followers'. Everything is constructed in terms of individual achievement.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of seven artists and writers, is said to have been dominated by Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti, described as 'three enterprising and variously (but hugely) gifted young men' who developed their own different and highly individual paths. The lengthy period — from the founding of the Brotherhood in 1848 to Rossetti's death in 1882 — is reduced to a chronology of individual development marked by switches in artistic style and lifestyle. The catalogue entries put the works into a narrative of the artist's personal and artistic life, relations with his models. Little attention is given to the critical reception of the paintings or public debates about them. Life and art have been collapsed together, presented as mutually explanatory: art is a matter of private biography.

Pre-Raphaelite art is therefore offered to us as a domain where changes occur because of personal impulses. It has been effectively taken out of its historical context, the social and material conditions in which it was produced and consumed. In this exhibition art practice is considered to be the outcome of the innate talent and genius of artistic personages. This celebration of innate genius is an account of the past which actively denies the class struggles and gender conflicts of nineteenth-century society, the ways in which historical individuals were formed by and acted within class and gender power relations.

Artistic creativity is presented in this exhibition as the prerogative of men, the attribute of the male artist, of his masculinity. *The Pre-Raphaelites* includes only one woman artist, Elizabeth Siddall; in this showing of 250 items her work is represented by two water-colours. The exhibition has signally failed to include works by the many other women artists of this cultural group such as Rosa Brett, Catherine and Lucy Madox Brown, Georgiana Macdonald (later Burne-Jones), Marie Spartali. This exhibition denies the historical existence of women artists, refuses to acknowledge that women were producers of culture. Moreover, because the exhibition deals with fine art, the work of women such as Jane Burden Morris in embroidery and textiles has once again been erased. Indeed the omissions and silence on women artists are structural to this hagiography of great masculine genius. High cultural events such as *The Pre-Raphaelites* function powerfully in the production of patriarchal ideology. Male

Arthur Hughes: The Long Engagement

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artists and their works are accorded the privileged focus of attention and scholarship. Masculinity and creativity are not only set against the absence of women artists but also against the spectacle of 'feminine beauty'. Above all this is an exhibition about great men who made pictures of women.

Most of the reviews already published have dwelt at length on the spectacle of beautiful women provided by this exhibition. Intense interest has been generated around the female models. Art is consumed as that 'natural' condition of men looking at, being inspired by women. Such interpretations are also set in play in the catalogue. Rossetti, whose attributes are his artistry, genius and masculinity, is represented as making art because of his amorous and sexual encounters with a series of 'beautiful' women. William Morris's picture *Queen Guinevere* is understood in terms of 'the aloof, withdrawn personality' of Jane Burden Morris and considerable speculation on the relations between her, Rossetti and William Morris. Pre-Raphaelite women are offered to us as stereotypes of passive feminity: mysterious, melancholy, silent. Their active work and historical existence have been silenced. The class and gender relations between these historical women and men have been misrepresented. These bourgeois male artists persistently sought out working-class women for their difference and their sexual availability. Women like Elizabeth Siddall and Jane Burden were subjected to a programme of drastic reform. They were withdrawn from their working-class families and environments and drawn into this cultural group to work as artists, embroiderers, writers, models. The material conditions of existence of these women, located in specific gender and class power relations, determined their work as models for male artists, their sexual and social subordination.[2] In *The Pre-Raphaelites* stereotypical notions of the langorous melancholy of these women have been projected onto and read off from the paintings for which they are said to have modelled. But these women and their lives do not explain the images of Woman shown in this exhibition. The images are neither expressions of the male artist's sexuality nor reflections of the female model's features and personality.

William Morris: "Queen Guinevere" (detail)

These images of women were produced in a regime of representation of Woman. This was historically situated in the shifting material and ideological practices of the period, 1840s — 1880s. The painted and drawn images of women do not record individual men's obsessions with individual women, masculine fantasies about woman as 'the mystery of existence', or daily occurrences in these women's lives. Visual representations render visible the difference of Woman. Historians have drawn attention to the nineteenth-century construction of Woman in terms of gender contrast, and around the polarity of virgin/whore, Madonna/Magdalen, indicating that this distinction was drawn between women especially on the axis of class. The pure bourgeois woman stood against the impure adulteress, prostitute, working-class woman. Visual images worked to secure this polarity between the pure woman — figured in Beatrice, the Virgin, the nun — and the impure woman — the 'fallen woman' of *The Awakening Conscience*, the adulterous Guinevere. Pre-Raphaelite paintings were engaged in representing a complex of class and gender power relations. Works such as Millais's *Isabella* or Hughes's *The Long Engagement* assisted in the generation of the ideology of heterosexual romantic love, so crucial to the formation of the bourgeoisie, which bound women effectively and willingly in subordination to men.

Today women are subordinated to men across a wide and diverse range of social institutions. High culture is a key institution for women's oppression. By erasing the complex histories of class and gender in which images were made, the knowledge produced in art history and high culture about art and the artist actively work to secure present-day patriarchal power relations, sexual and social. In *The Pre-Raphaelites* artistic creativity is decisively tied to masculinity, art proposed as the outcome of men desiring women, and Woman defined as Image, that beautiful object to be looked at, desired by and delected over by men. By contrast Man is the active agent, he who has power to define Woman in terms of desirable appearance and passivity: her beauty feeds his desire which by his innate talent is effortlessly turned into his great art, or so art history tells us. Such patriarchal definitions of Woman, desire and sexuality are pervasive in our society, and high culture provides no safe or tranquil retreat.

[1] The Pre-Raphaelites Exhibition is on at the Tate Gallery in London until May 28.

2 For an extended consideration of these issues see Deborah Cherry and Griselda Pollock, Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: A Study of the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall in *Art History* VII 2, June 84.

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ARCHITECTS IN CRISIS

Martin Pawley

The importance of architectural design in the cultural life of the community . . .fallen to ridicule?

This year Britain's 25,000 architects are celebrating their institute's 150th anniversary. The festivities will culminate in a gala evening at Hampton Court in May, with Prince Charles as guest of honour. The only problem is that the profession is coming apart at the seams.

Since 1945 the architectural profession has changed so profoundly that its present form has neither historical precedent nor foreseeable future. In the immediate postwar years it underwent an enormous expansion so that by 1950 the number of registered practitioners was already 40% higher than in 1939 and, more significantly, the number of students of architecture had risen by 500% to an estimated 11,000 — virtually one student for every architect. The unsettling nature of this explosive growth was clear even then, and as early as 1948 the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Council appointed a committee chaired by Sir Percy Thomas 'To consider the present and future position of architects in private practice.'

It was the conclusion of the committee that 'If the housing needs of the nation, the making good of buildings destroyed by war and dereliction, and the demand for new ones, were the criteria by which to estimate the future prospects of architects ... a steady prosperity for the profession for at least the next fifty years' could be foreseen. And so it appeared, for an immense growth in central government, local government and nationalised industry construction work had thus far created employment in pace with increased membership — not merely by the direct route of creating departments staffed with salaried architects, but also through the handing on of work to private practices.

Since it could be shown that the growth of the public sector made a large contribution to the work of the private, earlier criticisms of the emergence of a large salaried class in the profession were soon stilled.

In the same way the considerable expansion of architectural education and the emergence of a class of membership insulated from the vagaries of the construction economy altogether found few opponents. While the first professorship in architecture, at Liverpool University, dated from 1894, and full time classes at the Architecural Association began in 1901, almost all the 29 schools of architecture in existence in 1950 had been created in response first to the requirements of legal professional registration, laid down in the 1930s, and second to the introduction of grant-aided study under the 1944 Education Act. Between 1939 and 1950 the number of architects involved in teaching more than doubled and, as the postwar student boom passed through the schools, this group became established as the intellectual leadership of the profession. A status confirmed by the 1958 Oxford Conference which decided that full time education in university and polytechnic departments was to be the recognised route to professional status.

Steady prosperity for the profession in the terms foreseen by the Percy Thomas report did in fact continue for the best part of a quarter of a century, peaking in the late 1960s when nearly half a million houses were completd every year and 10% of the GNP was consumed in building. In 1964 the expansion of the public sector was such that only one of 61 county councils had no architects department and the 200 local authority departments in existence employed 25% of the profession. Central government employed another 10% in what was then called the Ministry of Public Building and Works, the National Health Service, what was to become the Department of Education and Science, the Home Office and several other administrative branches. By 1976, even though the fall in workload triggered by the 1974 energy crisis had already wound construction activity back to the level of the late 1950s, no less than 40% of a profession twice as large as it had been in 1950 consisted of salaried architects in the public employ. The dependence of private architects upon the public sector was even more striking, with 40% of new commissions arriving from this source.

The profession which greeted the economic disaster of the recession was thus structured in an entirely novel way. Of about 22,000 active architects, 9,000 were salaried public employees, 3,000 were teachers or engaged in miscellaneous activities, and 10,000 were employed in the private sector either as salaried workers, associates or partners in more than 3,000 practices — of which some 450 were responsible for well over half the work carried out. Actual principals in private practice were probably fewer than 5,000, a number not very different to that in existence in 1939.

The onset of a severe decline in workload soon opened up cracks in the cement linking these disparate factions. Separate organisations representing each group gained strength and the institute itself was compelled to fight on two fronts: externally for the life of the profession, and internally against the withdrawal of any group which considered itself inadequately represented or served. In the public sector redundancies, begun with local government reorganisation in 1974, rapidly intensified with the merging and closure of formerly independent departments. In the private sector practices closed down, sought overseas work, or reduced themselves to a skeletal establishment, often only the principals themselves. Teaching jobs were much in demand, often drawing 50 or more applicants for every post even though incomes in this sector were relatively low. Problems which had been developing

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over a long period suddenly assumed a critical importance. The 1975 report of a RIBA group formed to look into the whole question of professional competence following a worrying increase in building failures concluded that 'The frequency of complaints, the labyrinth of controls and the volume of technical and other information, the decline in contractual responsibility, standards of craftsmanship, and inflationary pressures leading to irresponsible claims against architects have made the profession acutely conscious of new and hitherto unknown risks.'

Not least of the hitherto unknown risks was a rapid change in the public image of the architect and a widespread attack on the functional principles of modern design which had underpinned the whole period of postwar growth. Nothing more clearly illustrates the fissile nature of the new profession than the enthusiasm with which its intellectual leadership, shielded from the impact of economic forces by tenured academic appointments, conducted this ill-timed ideological purge: unless perhaps it is the failure of those modernists honoured for their achievements during the years of prosperity to spring to the defence of themselves and their abused colleagues.

Today, the crisis in architecture may be a subject for catastrophe theory. While it is possible that a dramatic renewal of capital spending on construction might wind the fortunes of the profession back to the boom years of the 1960s, it is more likely that the changes undergone and the animosities revealed cannot be reversed. Under the impact of rising energy costs the housing needs of the nation are as urgent as ever, but there is little likelihood of the recreation of dismantled local authority departments to carry out the necessary programme. Similarly what the RIBA once described as 'The importance of architectural design in the cultural life of the community' once fallen to ridicule cannot easily be restored to respect.

Part of the crisis in architecture is the conflict between an 'independent professional' and 'salaried employee' group identity. Before the Second World War, the ideology of the independent professional was almost universal. In the early 50s the large contribution of public sector spending which went to private practices enhanced their professional self-image. Since then the influence of the salaried public sector has grown. At present the collapse of the public sector as a source of work causes the two groups to make contradictory demands on the leadership: the salaried architects to oppose government policies, the independent professionals to seek an accommodation with them. The desire of both groups for a single collective identity as architects may collapse under this strain; either the salaried group may take over the profession, pushing it perhaps towards independent action, or two individual organisations may form and the profession divide itself between them. The 150th anniversary celebrations may be very close to this breaking point.

What the architectural profession achieved in the years after World War Two was a measure of cruciality which it has since lost in a process of growth unrelated to work, that can be compared to the devaluation of a currency. Revaluation will in all probability require the withdrawal of some denominations and the creation of units of larger value. At present the graduation of 1,000 new architects every year into a market for their services 25% smaller than it was in 1979 bodes ill for professional solidarity.

TURC

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White Magic	— 21 May 8.30pm
	— 30 May 6.15pm
Vibration	— 22 May 6.15pm
	— 24 May 8.30pm
Destiny	— 22 May 8.30pm
	— 27 May 8.30pm
A Home For Gentle Souls	— 23 May 8.30pm
	— 28 May 6.15pm

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1939: THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE WAR
John Attfield and Stephen Williams (eds)
Lawrence and Wishart £4.95 pbk
£9.95 hbk
ISBN 85315 581 X

For 45 years there has been controversy about the policy of the Communist Party at the beginning of the Second World War. The party started with the policy of 'the fight on two fronts'. This involved supporting the war against Hitler, but simultaneously calling for the removal of Chamberlain and the men of Munich from the government. Five weeks later it declared that the war should be opposed as 'a fight between imperialist powers over profits, colonies and world domination.' Why was the policy changed? And was the change correct?

The Communist Party leadership, of which I was a member for many years, took the view, on each occasion when these questions were raised, that it would be a diversion from more urgent tasks to discuss and decide on them. I now think that this was a mistake, and that the 1939 policy should have been reviewed while the main protagonists were still alive.

Some are, and this book, the record of a conference held by the History Group of the Communist Party in 1979 in which several of them took part, is therefore very much to be welcomed. Many of the contributions make fascinating reading.

Ted Bramley, a member of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau in 1939, describes the 'bombshell' effect of the Communist International's decision, made known three or four weeks after the outbreak of the war, that it should be opposed. He and other contributors give a number of reasons for the rapid acceptance of that decision. The attitude of the Chamberlain government was already raising doubts about the 'fight on two fronts' line. Because the Soviet party was the only one to have led its people to socialism, and because of the role it and the Comintern had played in the anti-fascist struggle, communists for the most part accepted without question the correctness of the views which came from Moscow.

In addition Marxist education on war was then largely based on Lenin's writings about the imperialist war of 1914-18, and *The Short History of the CPSU (B)*, a sort of bible for communists, which had said in 1938 that 'a second imperialist war has already begun.'

Once the initial shock had worn off, it was not therefore so difficult to accept the change of policy, even though it meant the virtual abandonment of the distinction made between the fascist and bourgeois-democratic powers at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in 1935.

Opinions differ on the role of the Comintern. Dave Priscott, who, as a young worker in Portsmouth opposed the war from the beginning, warns against over-emphasis on its responsibility. I think he is right in saying that if the Comintern had not intervened there would have been continued opposition to the 'fight on two fronts' line in the party. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Ted Bramley is correct when he says that the intervention of the Comintern was decisive.

I am sure that this was the view of Harry Pollitt, with whom I worked closely between 1949 and 1956, when he was general secretary and I was assistant general secretary of the Communist Party. With the support of J R Campbell, Pollitt fought hard in the Central Committee against the Comintern line, saying, as he told me, that they were meeting 'like a lot of rabbits in front of a snake.' But when he failed to convince its members he accepted the majority decision, agreed to his removal from the position of general secretary, and publicly expounded party policy.

He told 800 miners at Trealaw: 'As a man who believes in the Communist Party before anything else in the world, it is my duty to expound its policy', adding that 'it was a splendid thing for working people to know that the Communist Party was strong enough to depose leaders who disagreed with its policy — if the Labour Party had adopted a similar position we should not be in the position we are today.'

Was the change of line right or wrong? Monty Johnstone, in his excellent opening, concludes that the original policy of the 'fight on two fronts' was correct. Bramley, Idris Cox and most participants take the same view, though the opposite case is forcefully argued by others. Pollitt himself considered after the war that his initial stand was right.

The main argument of those who think otherwise is that the Chamberlain government was not anti-fascist, only objected to Hitler because he threatened Britain's imperialist position, and was aiming to switch the war against the Soviet Union. All this is true. But the question remains: what was the *objective* result of the British government's action in declaring war on Nazi Germany, repeatedly described by the Comintern since 1935 as the main, the worst, the most vicious enemy of the working people?

This action, irrespective of the motives for it or the wishes of the government, placed Britain on the side of the forces opposed to fascism. Of course the Chamberlain government had imperialist aims. So did the Churchill government after the Soviet Union came into the war. Of course Chamberlain wanted to switch the war. But the issue was how to stop him.

In retrospect, I think that the 'fight on two fronts' would have made it more difficult, not easier, for Chamberlain to switch the war against Hitler. Though the Communist Party did much good mass work between 1939 and 1941, and received support as the only party conducting such work during the 'political truce', its position was certainly not in tune with the feelings of the majority of working people, and to that extent there was a degree of isolation. Had the 'fight on two fronts' policy continued, the party could have mobilised much greater mass action against the Chamberlain policy of switching the war.

Of the many lessons to be learnt from the 1939 events, the most important is that each Communist Party should make up its own mind about its policy, paying attention to the views of others, but not treating them as holy writ. Stalin himself said in 1946 that 'the Second World War from the very

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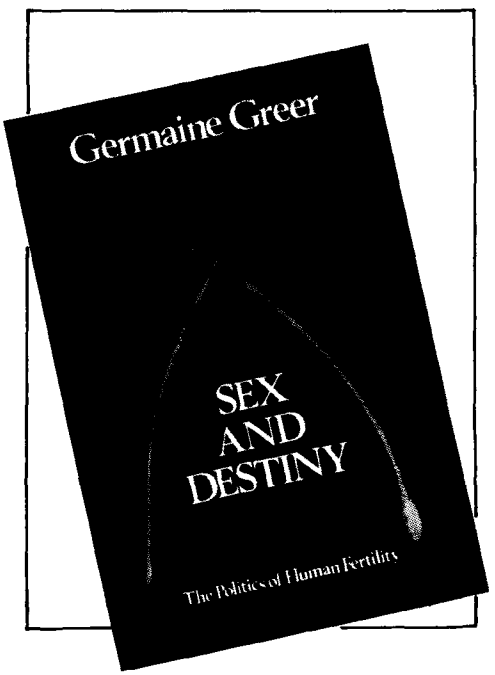
onset assumed the nature of an anti-fascist war, a war of liberation . . .', though without directly admitting that he was wrong in 1939. There are no infallible parties and no infallible leaders. We must make our own decisions on the facts and with the abilities available to us.

George Matthews



SEX AND DESTINY: THE POLITICS OF HUMAN FERTILITY
Germaine Greer
Secker and Warburg hbk £9.95
ISBN 0 436 18801 5

Germaine Greer's book is like a shooting star: it will glitter for a while, and then disappear into the void. It is ambitious, and brilliant, but ultimately a failure.

She traverses a vast terrain in the book: from the anthropology of motherhood to the causes of sterility; from the history of eugenics, to the demography of the globe. What is new, and brilliant, about this passionate tome is the placing of certain ideas in relation to each other in order to pose some vital political questions. But her basic mistake was to pitch the book at a semi-academic level, on a breadth of subjects she is not qualified to handle; specialists could take her to task on grounds which threaten to discredit her arguments. She could have written a shorter, cheaper, and less pretentious paperback which would have achieved a wider audience and still suited her political purpose. This is twofold: to indict Western cultural imperialism on the specific terrain of gender, sexuality and fertility; and despite repeated disclaimers, to place a cat among the pigeons in current feminist debates.

The elusive but recurring focus of the book is the relationship of sexual, marital, and familial patterns to the social regulation of population. Greer's basic argument is that societies have 'always' struggled to 'control the balance of population and resources'. The twentieth century programmes of the imperialist powers to promote fertility regulation through abortion, mechanical contraception, and sterilisation should not be seen as leadership to generage 'consciousness of a global responsibility' but rather as the latest phase in a long history of destructive colonial intervention into other cultures. 'Among the dubious achievements of the twentieth century, along with total war and the neutron bomb, will go our character as the sterilising civilisation.' But her attempts to explain this drive to sterilise the wretched on the earth — as a result of cultural alienation, ethnological imperative, racist ideology, the rise of the modern state — are a complete mishmash of material from all over the place. She lurches from genuine insights to gross analytical blunders. Yet I think the book should be taken seriously in its attempt to pose the question.

The most striking argument of the book is its celebration of the sphere of kinship relations: a sphere which has always been the source of collective strength and protection for women; one in which the (affinal) role of marriage is to link social groups as much as two individuals; and a central site of regulation of the delicate mechanism of fertility, sexual behaviour and the reproduction of 'cultural identity'. Greer points to the apparent resilience of this space in 'traditional' (ie, agrarian-based) societies, in the face of systematic onslaught by colonialism, evangelical religions, (although Islam gets off lightly here) and capitalism. The cutting edge of the book lies in its detail of the relentless assault on this sphere by family planners, the population lobby, national governments and Western cultural imperialism with its 'model of recreational sex'.

Despite her crude collapse of vastly different cultures, social relations and religions of the Third World into an amorphous sludge of generalities; despite her simplistic paradigm of 'traditional-modern' society, and the absence of any sense of history, dynamism, or even contradiction in the world at large, I think that Greer has thrown a spotlight on a vital dimension of cultural imperialism. This point has long been made by women of African and Asian origin and descent, but it has not yet been sufficiently heard or understood in the Western Left.

So what does she have to say to feminists? Greer is dealing with many subjects which (mainly white) Western feminism has not touched, and she has a global outlook which is sadly lacking from much of British feminism. There is no doubt that she is throwing a casual challenge to Western feminism, whose achievements and goals she is implicitly evaluating in the light of her model of 'traditional' society. In her whirlwind travels around the globe, Greer has stumbled on the importance of extended kinship networks to female solidarity and the value of motherhood to women in different cultures:

> 'The management of pregnancy, childbed and child-raising (is) was the principal expression of the familial and societal network of women, itself one of the essential cohesive elements in any society and a necessary leaven to the competitive hierarchies of men'. (p 19)

> 'That motherhood is virtually meaningless in our society is no ground for supposing that the fact that women are still defined by their mothering function in other societies is simply an index of their oppression'. (p 25)

An important recognition, and perhaps a precondition for communication between Western and African feminists, for example, although Greer has absolutely no means to analyse the different ways in which motherhood is constituted in different national, ethnic, or class contexts.

But she goes further. She suggests that as a result of capitalist industrialisation Western women have been expropriated from their gender power; and that 'It is largely as an unconscious reaction to this diminution of women's role that women are now exerting such pressure to be allowed into the competitive male hierarchy'; this has led to a vicious circle whereby Western women 'cultivate a masculine sense of self'; — so that increasingly childbirth has been seen as disruptive, and children are disliked. Is she accusing feminism of colluding in the promotion of sex religion, the nuclear family, hostility to children? Perhaps rather she is accusing Western feminism of remaining ethnocentric and not squaring up to the problem of reproduction.

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When Greer asks 'Is reproduction actually simply a way to orgasm, and are children nothing but a by-product?'; and when she asks why she as a twentieth century feminist should 'be among the few champions of the Family as a larger organisation than the suburban dyad', I do not think she is simply doing a somersault on the fundamental tenets of the feminism of the early 1970s. Rather, she is attempting to reconsider whether the goals of sisterhood, or female solidarity, are not negated by the wider conditions of Western society and economy.

But in saying this, she is far from the lone voice in the wilderness which she fancies herself to be. The changing class, racial and age composition of Western feminism in the 1980s has already forced debate on these questions. Greer, however, wants to play extremist devil's advocate. She cries for a total reordering of priorities: fertility, sterility,childrearing, kin networks (within which the significance of marriage is affinal, not conjugal) must be reclaimed by Western women as *part* of the feminist project. If not, she says, we are doomed to competition with our men, which both places our gender identity in deeper and deeper crisis, and leads to our collusion with the worst kind of cultural imperialism.

I do not think, as some do, that her book is dangerous, stupid or irrelevant. On the contrary, the shooting star can make us pause and reflect on the galaxy.

Judy Kimble

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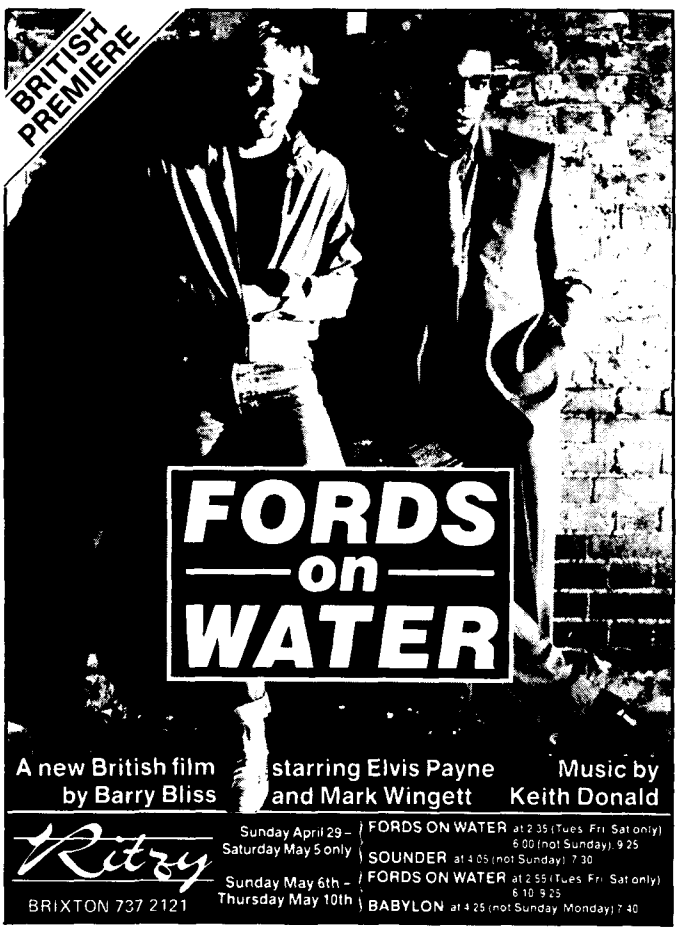
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VIEWPOINT

Debate...

Below we carry responses to Beatrix Campbell's 'How the other half lives' and Jon Bloomfield's 'Crossed Lines', which appeared in the April issue

ANN PETTIFOR
Women and the Labour Party

Bea Campbell's analysis of the Labour Party's chauvinism in the April issue of *Marxism Today* was acutely perceptive. In it she correctly and boldly challenged the structures, organisation and party that Labourism has created, and rightly asserted that these political structures 'have alienated the people and left them with the pain of their own powerlessness.' 'Labour', she wrote '*created* mass alienation from the process of politics itself. It de-politicised the people. It reduced them to consumers. So what could have been the classic case of social democracy's success has become the classic case of its failure.'

There is nevertheless, an important but unanswered question that arises from Bea Campbell's analysis: how *are* the people to be empowered? For women on the Left, the concern is particularly with the majority: how are the women of our class to be empowered so that they may enjoy economic independence from men; the freedom and right to paid work; and the political power necessary to bring their values to bear on a society torn asunder by the masculinist militarism, and divisive 'monetarism' imposed by a woman leader of right-wing conservatism.

For an answer to this major political and organisational problem, Bea Campbell directs us to the solution that has been on offer from the Communist Party since (according to Jon Bloomfield in the same issue) the 'major modernisation of its programme, The British Road to Socialism, in 1977. Alliances. She joins Hobsbawm, Bloomfield and many others in once again urging alliances upon us: between men and women, and between 'the people and the people's parties'. Alliances in which 'different political and social forces encounter each other, enter into dialogue and are transformed by each other.'

Bea goes on to argue earnestly for dialogue: 'what is at stake for the Left and the labour movement now is whether the necessary *conversation* (my emphasis) between the people and the people's parties is one that the parties are prepared to have.'

Now as far as I know Bea has been around the labour movement for a long time; she knows as well as the rest of us hardened and toughened old cookies in the Labour Party that the men are not interested in 'conversations' let alone alliances! That there are those in the Labour Party who enjoy a monopoly of the labour movement's power — and who are not prepared to concede an ounce of it to the poor and the powerless — whether they be council tenants, the Communist Party, the Greenham peace campaigners — or the majority within their own movement, women. To expect them to 'enter into dialogue and to be transformed' is to go down the British Road to Nowhere. Labour Party women have walked that road for some time now; the name of the slough they came to was Despond.

But Bea does *hint* at the necessary solution in her piece when she argues that: 'Labour *depended* on the peace movement to do the *work* that put war and peace on the political agenda. It was Labour's task *only* to express that political work electorally.' In this straightforward electoral task, Labour failed dismally.

Why men and not women?

What is needed therefore is a strengthening of organisational and political links between the extra-parliamentary campaigning that is present and necessary in a healthy democracy — and the party, Labour, vested with the *political power* to give effect to those campaigns. Certainly the Right have these links. The extra-parliamentary power of the CBI, the Freedom Association and the Institute of Directors, not to mention the Women's Institute, is strongly linked — both financially and organisationally — to the political power of the Conservative Party.

Which brings me to the single and most glaringly hypocritical aspect of all this talk of 'alliances'. It is expressed openly in Jon Bloomfield's article in the April issue, in which he argued that the Communist Party's programme 'recognises that social movements arise from specific contradictions in society not reducible simply to class. The (Communist) Party welcomes and seeks to strengthen the women's liberation, anti-racist, environmental and nationalist movements . . . As peoples, rather than class-based, movements it is inappropriate to seek to attach them organisationally to the Labour Party. In this sense they are clearly different from trade unions'.

Women, Brother Bloomfield, are not going to be conned by that little aside. Why is it in order for trade unionists (ie, men) to be organised and attached to the political power of the Labour Party, and not women, blacks and environmentalists? Why is it in order for men, organised within their trade unions, to be defined as a class, and not women — unorganised, dispersed and isolated in their council flats, suffering 'the pain of their own powerlessness'? Why must women form 'alliances' while men 'attach' their organised power to the political power of the Labour Party?

As far back as 1920, that strong Fabian feminist, Barbara Drake argued that: 'between unorganised women and organised men, there can be no agreement.' We, of the Labour Women's Action Committee would go further and argue: between unorganised women and organised men, there can be no alliances, no unity and never any equality. For this reason we are active within the Labour Party, clearing the ground, creating the political space, building the necessary structures, changing the constitution, so that *women* can organise for political power. It is a momentuous, unpleasant and often very messy, but absolutely key struggle — to empower the majority of our dispersed, isolated and powerless class.

But as Bea herself points out, we are opposed in this task by our new 'progressive' leader, who like so many men in the party, 'fears a constituency that can't be controlled'; and who it appears is only able to define us in terms of other men — 'the men who would use us to gain tactical advantage'. More damagingly we are opposed by women within the party: Gwynneth Dunwoody, Marie Patterson, Betty Boothroyd, and Judith Hart — to name but the most prominent — have all sided with the trade union bloc vote against us.

Their self-protective sense of repulsion can be understood in a paraphrase of Andrea Dworkin's thesis. Because feminism in the Labour Party is a movement

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for the liberation of the powerless by the powerless, in a closed system based on their powerlessness, (ie, the women's organisation) right-wing women judge it a futile movement. Frequently they also judge it a malicious movement in that it jeopardises the bargains with power (ie, men) that they have made. (See Dworkin: *Right Wing Women* published by Women's Press).

Achieving our objective — the political organisation of the women of our class — requires us therefore to overcome some quite formidable resistance. It would be a great help in this struggle to have the active support of prominent women of Britain's Left — women like Doreen Massey, Hilary Wainwright, Lynne Segal, Sheila Rowbotham and Anna Coote — all of whom have, like the Communist Party, maintained a respectful distance from this particular struggle.

RON BELLAMY
Trends in the CP

I have been asked to comment on Jon Bloomfield's April 1984 article 'Communists in search of an identity'. I do so with reservations about its status, since he is not a member of the elected national CP leadership. However, with one fifth of his space, I am forced to limit my disagreements to a single issue, 'trends in the Communist Party'.

What Jon Bloomfield ignores, perhaps as inconvenient, is that the 'opposition' to the BRS at the 1977 Congress was about one sixth of the delegates, whereas at the 1983 Congress the 'opposition' to the majority decisions had risen to 40%. Has a quarter of the party suddenly moved from pro-BRS to anti-BRS positions? His so-called second trend of oppositionists are 'a combination of some who *originally opposed* the 1977 BRS with conservative elements who *nominally* supported it' (Italics added RB). Since all these must have *voted for* the BRS in 1977, the assertion that they 'originally opposed it' is simply inconsistent with the 1977 voting figures and is therefore untrue. '*Nominally* supported' is a category of Bloomfield's imagination. He means they voted for the BRS. If so, the other remark is simply a smear.

But in any event, even supposing they originally opposed, I hope that Bloomfield will allow what is consistent with our rules and principles, namely that they reserved their opinions, or changed them, or fought for them in legitimate ways. Otherwise, I don't quite know what to do about Dave Cook, Pat Devine, and others (perhaps JB himself?) who fought for the alternative proposals (the matter is on record) on Inner Party Democracy in 1979, proposals which Dave Priscott argued would liquidate the party.

Not only some of the 16% of the 1977 opposition, but even many leading comrades had difficulty in seeing quite the sharp difference between 'broad democratic alliance' and 'anti-monopoly alliance' which Bloomfield makes a test of sectarianism. For example, Dave Priscott in MT October 1981 — '. . . a different, democratic, anti-monopoly, road forward'. I note that Bloomfield's own quotation from the 1983 Congress resolution falsifies it. He stops short with 'the main enemy, the Tory government. . .'. The resolution goes on '. . . which, acting on behalf of monopoly capital. . .'. Many other leading comrades have taken the same, correct, line of treating democratic as having the same content as anti-monopoly. Indeed, if the democratic struggle isn't directed against, or hindered by, monopoly capital, just who is the main enemy?

Not only does this kind of divisive polarising seem to be consciously sought, but it is spontaneously generated by the Bloomfield-type emphasis on 'non-class issues'. In the historical development of class societies there are no issues which are not influenced, directly or indirectly, by class interests. The phrase 'not reducible to class' sounds so anti-dogmatic. But it means either: a)'not connected *at all* with class' — in which case it is a non-Marxist, idealist position from which it would follow for example that men rape women in any and every society, and rape is ineradicable except by eradicating men; or b) 'connected with class, but not in a simple or direct way'. This is a mature Marxist position, but quite inconsistent with the concept of 'non-class' issues. No serious Marxist that I know of has ever sought to argue that women's oppression arises solely from capitalist class society, though crucial concrete forms — unequal wages, unequal access to higher forms of wage employment — can exist only in capitalist society, as can the treatment of women as bourgeois property.

The 'new'

Next, as to the so-called 'conservative' elements who have not appreciated 'the new', and have a 'narrow, go-it-alone, sectarian approach', unappreciative of the possibility of broad movements, I don't know whether to laugh or to feel insulted by the arrogance. Already as a communist student I took part with the president of the Conservatives, (a later Prime Minister) in joint activity against Nazi Germany, and fought to build a broad alliance of 'peace-loving democracies' (ie, three major imperialist powers) with the USSR against the fascist alliance. This initiated a continuing communist tradition of building broad movements to defend democracy against the most reactionary forces of the time. Nor did those of us who had taken part in hierarchical organisations called armies ever confuse democratic forms with democratic content and aims. So that alibi, that some of us are afraid of broad alliances, or new social movements, is without basis.

As an historian, Jon Bloomfield should, indeed must, know just how much 'new thinking', how much replacement of the working class by 'new revolutionary forces' has had to be combatted by our own and other communist parties during his own lifetime. His failure to refer at all to opportunist trends can therefore only be deliberate. Let me remind him.

In 1956-7 (in the wake of the 20th Congress and Hungary, perhaps more understandable) the 'bureaucratic, sectarian' leadership of Pollitt, Gollan, McLennan, Matthews *et al* was to be replaced by 'new thinking' of the critical comrades, and democratic centralism to be abolished. This was followed in the early 60s by the leading role, on a world scale, of the new revolutionary forces, the peasantry, or that of the lumpen proletariat. In the late 60s it was student power, and black power, replacing the corrupt and decadent industrial proletariat. It was to combat these tendencies that Jack Woddis wrote his *New Theories of Revolution*, exploring their social roots, their impatience, their individualist anarchism, their contempt for working class discipline. In the mid and late 1970s there was the 'new thinking' that led to class collaboration over industrial democracy and the social contract, confusing the working class, and retrading the exploitation of the gains made from earlier shifts to the left. In 1979 came the new revisionist attempts to liquidate democratic centralism.

The parade of the word 'new' neither impresses nor intimidates. It has so often meant the passing novelty or fashionable trend adopted by unstable ideological positions.

The Communist Party does not need to find a 'new identity'. It has long had an identity of developing continuity reflected since 1951 in the *British Road to Socialism*.

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Letters

YTS

Dan Finn's article (February issue) was a serious attempt to analyse and develop a credible strategy in response to YTS. We in the ILP recognise and acknowledge the importance of the issues and the debate he has raised. We are, however, disappointed to see those who favour opposition to the MSC and YTS characterised as boycotters. This is not our position (see *YTS — The Tories Poisoned Apple*, 70p from ILP).

The ILP argues for a position of non-cooperation and a co-ordinated withdrawal from national and local MSC bodies. We see this as a prerequisite to the movement being able to mount a credible opposition to YTS and justify the support of the young trainees of today and the working class of tomorrow. However, the letter from trade union official B Rowlands, was a clear example of the the pragmatic attitudes and practices that have led the labour movement into a situation where it bears a heavy responsibility for the abuses, job substitution and lowering of wages and conditions that characterise YTS.

He suggests that the unions should use their position within the MSC to stop abuses, insist on proper training and gain an understanding among the trainees. But all the evidence points the other way. The TUC has not been able to stop job substitution, exploitation, and the reduction of wages and conditions. What its involvement and support of the MSC has done is to legitimise the Tory assault on young workers.

For the first time in its history the TUC has (unwittingly) embraced a strategy that cuts wages and conditions. They have been unable to ensure that abuses do not occur or that job substitution does not take place. They have failed to stop the scheme becoming, in effect, compulsory; they have failed to ensure basic employee status and rights for trainees; and they have failed to get any increase in the miserable allowance.

Ernie Jacques, Neil Rhodes, Leeds

RATE-CAPPING

John Stewart's article on rate-capping (April issue) is a welcome contribution on an important issue. However, his failure to deal with the situation in Scottish local government represents a serious omission.

The article suggests that rate-capping will overturn existing constitutional principles by allowing central government to directly determine levels of expenditure in individual local authorities. That may be true in England and Wales, but the situation in Scotland is that central government control has been a fact of life since 1981.

Lothian Region, Scotland's second largest local authority, provides the clearest example although a number of other local authorities have also been 'hit'. After a massive campaign of resistance in 1981, the Secretary of State for Scotland has determined Lothian's level of expenditure in each financial year from 1981/82 to 1984/85. This has been done either through direct intervention or by the threat of intervention. The 1981 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act empowered him to withhold Rate Support Grant and the 1982 Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act allowed him to set the rate.

The Government has undoubtedly used the Scottish experience in framing its proposals for England and Wales. The Left, particularly *Marxism Today*, should also be aware of that experience.

Archie Fairley, Edinburgh

SEISMIC SHOCKS

Having survived the 'seismic shocks' that the CP has had over the years, I found Jon Bloomfield's article 'Crossed Lines' (April issue) extremely helpful and necessary, to express openly the political and ideological differences in the labour movement and the CP as part of it.

It is not easy to rationalise and balance a grasp of 1984 (and all that), especially for those of us tied often by emotional umbilical cords to our personal memories of the 30s, 40s and 50s. Many younger people who regretfully leave the CP, often do so weary of the constant battle against an almost institutional concept of Marxism which lumps all critical appraisals as 'revisionist' or 'anti-Soviet'.

There is a growing interest in the varied dialogue in *Marxism Today* from people seeking guidelines to the survival path whether from acid rain or the political brain storms of Thatcherite Britain.

Dave Davis, Bromley

GOBBLEDY-GOOK

I have twice read the article by Allan Harkness titled *Photography's Changing Face* (Marxism Today, April). I think Allan Harkness is a closet fly-by-night double glazing salesman. His writing shows a similar confident assertiveness masquerading as information but actually being no more than gobbledygook. In essence I suppose the article was trying to point out that a small number of photographers and writers are trying to show to a largely uninterested world that (a) s/he who holds the camera has the power to fix the way you are seen and, indeed, how you see yourself; (b) that the camera, like any other medium, reveals the prejudices of its user as much as it records any other aspects of the world. This amounts to what might be described as the politics of representation. However, it will never be taken very seriously as a subject if it is continued to be discussed in the meaningless jargon employed by Mr Harkness.

Peter Dormer, London

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Stuart Hall's article 'The Culture Gap' (MT January, 1984) has just reached me. It is excellent — as far as it goes. The magic word it never mentions though is 'growth': that is the name of the real problem the Left has never faced up to economically or culturally.

It seems to me that 'growth' as commonly understood is more than simply an economic number; it is a social and political strategy, even an ideology. It is the key concept which permitted the remarkable re-birth of capitalism after 1950 unforeseen by anyone (except the Americans who did so much to export it and promote it from the Marshall Plan on). It provided the underpinning for consensus politics and the welfare state, and when it stops, as we now know, consensus collapses and the welfare state gets bashed. Ideologically it provided the 'revolution of rising expectations', defining wants, needs and opportunities: it's a way of life, a redefinition of the idea of progress and capitalist legitimacy in economic terms. It takes hold of the old, casual mechanism by which goods are first available to rich elites then spread down to the populace at large (sugar, newspapers, holidays), expands it and makes a system out of it.

Culturally the 'revolution of rising expectations' did happen, and led all classes to assume that their standards of living would rise year by year (one of Mrs Thatcher's greatest ambitions — and apparent 'achievements' — in fact has been to get rid of this attitude). That was the real cultural revolution of consumer capitalism, the greatest contrast with what went before, and of course it affected working class life-styles and outlook even more than anyone else's.

Do we really want growth or not? Everyone who gets them likes the benefits: the videos, cars, foreign holidays and credit cards the vast majority of us now have Access to. Yet Jeremy Seabrook has described with devastating effect the costs: the collapse of working class social, cultural and psychological identity (especially in the collective sense), the depths of alienation — among the latest generations worst of all — produced by growth-as-mirage. Now that we're told not to expect anything any more, what should we expect? It's up to the Left to provide an answer, perhaps even looking to Italy, as Stuart Hall suggests, for some ideas.

David Ellwood, Italy.

We welcome your letters for the June issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 4 May

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Murdoch is a freelance journalist living in Dublin.
Monty Johnstone is a member of the CP Theory and Ideology Committee.
Martin Rabstein is a community relations officer and member of the CP Race Relations Committee.
David Griffiths and **Chris Holmes** are past and present chairs of the Labour Housing Group and contributors to *Right to a Home* (published last month by Spokesman).
Larry Gostin is general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties.
Alan Hunt is a member of the *Marxism Today* Editorial Board.
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Nicholas Miles is a research officer at the Open University.
John Grahl is a member of the CP Economic Committee.
Gregor McLennan is co-editor of *State and Society in Contemporary Britain* (to be published in the autumn).
Chris Savage-King is a freelance writer who contributes to *Dance Theatre Journal, Harpers and Queen* and *Spare Rib.*
Joel Cayford is a computer systems analyst and is active in the Independent Film and Video Makers Association.
Deborah Cherry is a feminist art historian and teaches at Manchester University.
Martin Pawley is news editor of *Architects Journal.*
George Matthews was formerly CP assistant general secretary and editor of the *Morning Star.*
Judy Kimble lectures in development at London University.
Ann Pettifor is secretary of the Labour Women's Action Committee and a member of the London Labour Party's Executive Committee.
Ron Bellamy is a member of the CP Yorkshire District Committee.

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Up Date

CAMPAIGNS

National Campaign Against Berufsverbote In W Germany every public employee can expect to be vetted for loyalty to the Constitution and over 5,000 have been dismissed. With recent developments at GCHQ, the Sarah Tisdall trial and the extension of vetting for jobs does W Germany's Berufsverbote have implications for us? The campaign is planning two delegate conferences this month to discuss this question (London 12 May and Glasgow 19 May). Further details from Jack Tyrell 265 Jersey Rd, Osterley, Middx 7W7 4RF (01 560 8758).

DEMONSTRATIONS

National March to Oppose the Police Bill 19 May. With the Bill proposing to extend police powers now in its final stages in Parliament the Campaign to Oppose the Police Bill has called for a national demonstration. Assemble at 12.00 for a march from Hyde Pk to Jubilee Gardens.

MEETINGS

Broad Democratic Alliances 8 May (Tues) Discussion organised by the Socialist Society's Strategy for Socialism Working Group. Paper by Nigel Kelsy (CP) 6.30 at 9 Poland Street, London W1. Further details from 01 692 4998.

Labour Party Womens Conference (Swansea) 12 May (Sat) *Marxism Today* fringe meeting with Beatrix Campbell. Further details 01 251 4406.

NUPE Conference (Bournemouth) 15 May (Tues) *Marxism Today* fringe meeting with Beatrix Campbell and Inez McCormack.

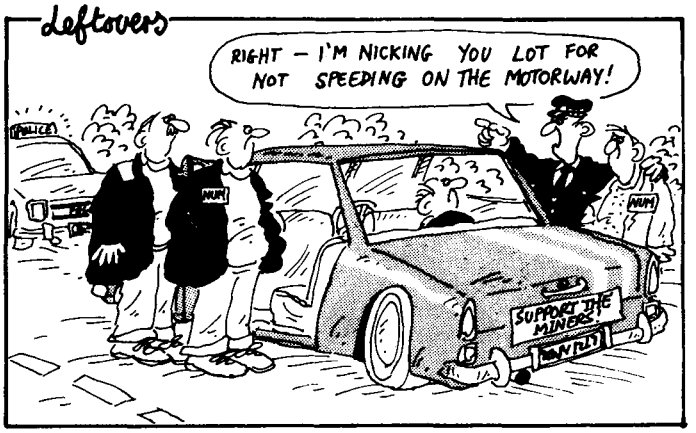
Finding a Voice 17 May (Thurs) A series of three discussions on popular culture sponsored by *Marxism Today* and the North West CP. The first features Eileen Murphy actress, playwright, socialist and feminist and Rick Gwilt poet and Arts Development Officer for Lancashire Trades Council. 7.30pm at Manchester Poly Students Union, Oxford Rd.

William Morris 'Socialism by Design' 31 May (Thurs) Roger Simon author of *William Morris Now* and *Gramsci's Political Thought* opens the second discussion on popular culture. 7.30pm at Manchester Polytechnic Students Union, Oxford Rd.

CONFERENCES

Labour Movement Conference Against the Police Bill 12 May. Jointly sponsored by the Labour Party and National Campaign Against the Police Bill. 1.00-6.00pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, Holborn, London. Details 01 249 8334.

Beyond Poor Images 12 May (Sat) A major child poverty action group discussion of why popular perceptions of poverty rarely match up to reality. Speakers include Bea Campbell, Michael Meadowcroft and Peter Townsend. 10.30-1.00pm City University, London EC1 Fee £2 (£1 unwaged) Contact Alan Booth CPAG, 1 Macklin St, London WC2 (01 242 3225).



Academic Freedom 12 May (Sat) A day of discussion with John Saville (Chairperson Campaign for Academic Freedom and Democracy) Dafydd Elis Thomas (MP) and Dave Egan. Organised by the Society for the Study of Welsh Laobur History. 4.30pm at Students Union, Park Place, Cardiff. Details from Neil Evans, Coleg Harlech, Harlech, Gwynedd (0766 780363 or 780767).

Major Miner Writers 12 May (Sat) A Conference on the writing produced by British Miners in the 30s. Margot Heinemann on 'Oppression and Militancy in the Coalfields', John Field on the Arthur Markham Prize, Anthony Gray on the writings of Fred Boden, Ray Hearne on 'Roger Dataller', Linda MacKenney on the plays of Jow Corrie, Andy Croft on the novels of Harry Heslop. Enrolment £4, details from Diane Jacks, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Leeds University.

Mayday 1940,41 and The Peoples' Convention Movement 19 May (Sat) An afternoon of discussion and films organised by the Scottish CP History Group. All welcome. 2.00pm at the Star Club, Carlton Place, Glasgow.

Issues for Socialist Feminists in the 80s 19-20 May (Sat/Sun) CSE-Socialist Society Women's Conference. Themes are The Family, Sexuality, Feminism and Racism. Peace and Employment. At Kingsway Princeton College, London WC1 £6.00 (unwaged £3.00) Creche must be booked. Details from CSE 25 Horsell Rd London N5 (01 607 9615).

Popular Literature 1 26 May (Sat) Bob Owens on *Pilgrim's Progress*, Jo Spence on *Cinderella*, Rosemary Jackson on *Frankenstein*, Robin Blackburn on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Helen Taylor on *Gone with the Wind*. 10.00-6.00pm at Ruskin College, Oxford. Offers of papers to Simon Birrey HWCSH Ruskin College, Oxford. Fee £4.00 (£2.00 unwaged).

The Illegality of Nuclear Weapons 27 May (Sun) Conference to discuss the legal, scientific and medical aspects of nuclear warfare. 10.00am at St Mary's Hall, Coventry. Fee £5.00 including lunch (£2.00 unwaged). Details from John Dewar, School of Law, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL (Cov 24011 ext 2119).

EVENTS

Chorlton Peace Festival 28 Apr (Sat) Organised by Chorlton CND with live music, a body popping contest, peace games, stalls, food and childrens entertainment. Speakers include Frank Allaun, Lynn Jamieson (National Council CND) and prospective local councillors. At Beech Rd Pk, Chorlton, Manchester 21. 11-5pm Free. Details from Derek Clarke (061 850 6033).

Marxism and Structuralism 30 Apr-9 Jul (Mondays). A course consisting of 8 lectures on recent developments in Marxist theory to provide both an introduction to and critical resume of these developments. 6.30-8.30pm at Goldsmiths College, School of Adult and Community Studies, New Cross, London SE14 6NW. Fee £5.00 (unwaged £1.00). Details from Madam Sarup (01 692 7171).

Merseyside International Workers Festival
May Day Rally 1 May (Tues) With local, national and international speakers. 7.30pm St Georges Hall, Liverpool.
Danger Men at Work 2 May (Wed) A play performed by the Topical Theatre 'a study of sexual harrasment at work'. 7.00 at Chaucers Tavern, Hardman St, Liverpool. Free.
The 'God has given us this leisure' Show 4 May (Thu) A pop concert with Mark Miwurdz, the Redskins, The Lotus Eaters, Levi Tafari and Virgin Dance. 7.30 at the Philharmonic Hall. £2.00 (unwaged £1.00).
March and Rally 5 May. With Askin Colliery Band, floats, steel band, fire engine, shire horse and cart etc. From Shaw St to Pier Head. Starts at 11am.
International Social 5 May. A Celidh, Latin American, African and English Folk music plus international cuisine. At Liverpool Town Hall. £2.00 (unwaged £1.00).
CND Film Show 6 May (Sun) 12-2.00pm followed by Vauxhall Writers Workshop performing sketches and poetry. 7.00-10.30pm. At Tom Hall's Tavern. Liverpool. Free.

The Levellers 1649 12 May (Sat) A day of international celebration to remember those early peace activists organised by WEA Oxford Industrial Branch. With Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and David Selbourne, also History Workshop procession round Burford followed by a Barn Dance. 10.00-12.30 at Warwick House, Burford, Oxon.

Non-Violent Direct Action Workshop 16 May. All Peace People welcome. To be held at Bourne Hall, Ewell, at 8.00pm. Epsom & Ewell CND Epsom 21348 or 24055. Facilities for disabled.

Entries for the June Update should be sent as soon as possible (latest date Friday 4 May) to Maria Loftus, Marxism Today 16 St John Street London EC1 or tel 01-251 4406 or 01-607 3344 (evenings).

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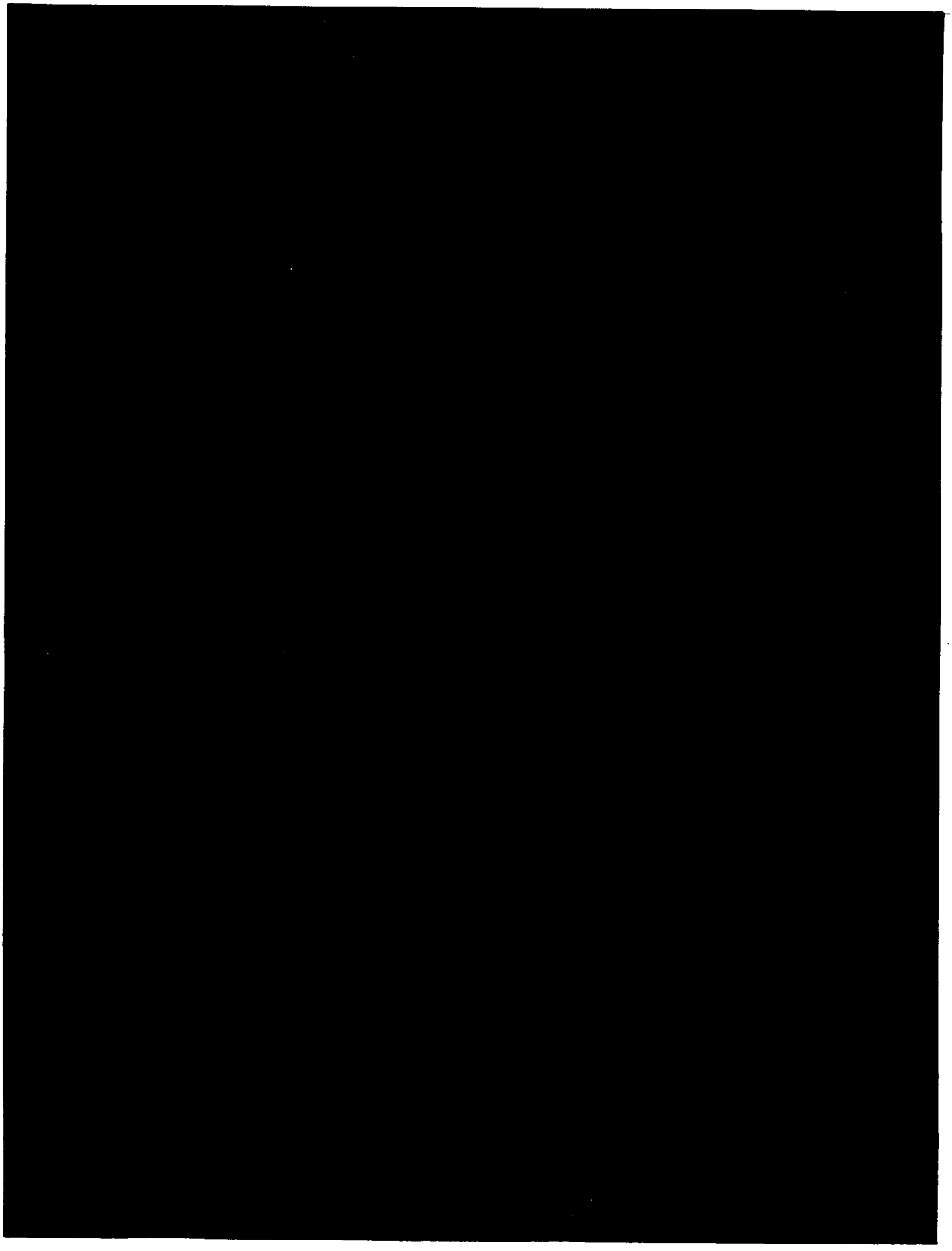

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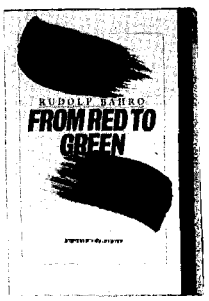

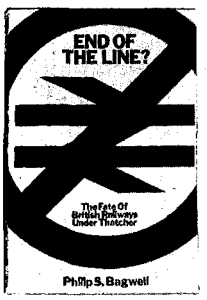

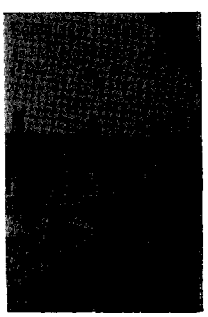

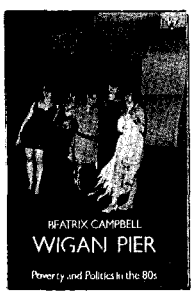

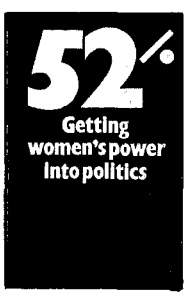

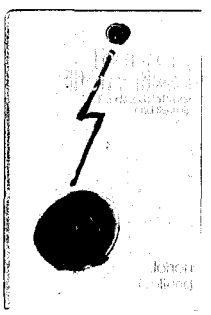

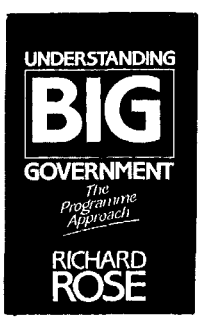

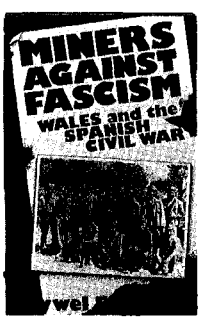

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